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The Nation.

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MARTIN SCORSESE'S BLUES
Leander Williams

WHITE HOUSE DIRTY TRICKS
The Editors

EDWARD SAID REMEMBERED

ENDANGERED SPECIES OF THE AMERICAN SOUTH

Fig. 1: Boulder Darter

Fig. 2: Mississippi Sandhill Crane

Fig. 3: Democrat

WHAT THE DEMS MUST DO TO SURVIVE by BOB MOSER

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LETTERS

'STACKED DECALOGUE'—NO DRIVEL!

Atlanta

■ I am an avowed conservative, America-loving libertarian who thinks 90 percent of what's in *The Nation* is pure left-wing crybaby drivel. But I have to admit, Katha Pollitt's column on the Ten Commandments is priceless! ["Subject to Debate," Sept. 22] JAY SWIFT

CANCÚN—NO SLUM!

Cancún, Mexico

■ In a grotesquely inaccurate and prejudiced article, Marc Cooper depicts Cancún as a vast slum, an environmental disaster and an example of globalization at its worst ["Behind Globalization's Glitz," Sept. 22]. Actually, it might be an example of globalization at its best—except it's not much of an example of globalization at all. Cancún was designed and built and mainly financed by Mexicans.

Many of the hotels have names like Omni or Sheraton, but they refer to the operating companies that provide marketing services. At least 70 percent of Cancún's hotels are owned by Mexicans. Even the franchises, like McDonald's, are Mexican companies, as are the franchisees.

The waters off Cancún are crystal clear. The lagoons suffer from some contamination, mainly due to illegal discharges by a small minority of hotels and restaurants, but by the standards of beach resorts like Key West they would be considered unpolluted. There is no visible smog here. The underground water table is beginning to show some signs of pollution, but nothing like what's happening to American cities. Garbage collection and disposal are indeed very poor.

The overwhelming majority of Cancún residents have water, sanitation, healthcare, electricity and educational services, and they live in houses made of cement, not tarpaper. A lot of these houses are quite simple, but residents are mainly homeowners rather than renters, and they fix up and expand the basic units with surprising speed.

Many of Cancún's residents have come from the most desperately hopeless poverty imaginable, seeking clean air and better jobs. Cooper never asks a very obvious question of any of the people he talks with: Would they like to go back to where they came from?

The article contains too many errors to correct here, so I've posted a more complete refutation on my website, www.cafecancun.com. Disclaimer: I have lived and worked in Cancún since 1983, but I have no connection of any kind with the Cancún tourism-promotion authorities.

JULES SIEGEL

COOPER REPLIES

Woodland Hills, Calif.

■ Few places in the hemisphere suffer such a profound socioeconomic divide as does Cancún, in effect dividing the city into two separate worlds. I am pleased to find that Siegel lives in the more fortunate one. MARC COOPER

FULL EQUALITY? NOT QUITE YET, GAYS

Amsterdam

■ I liked Doug Ireland's "Marriage of Convenience" [Sept. 1/8], but he goes a bit overboard when he says, "Germany now accords all the legal rights that married heterosexual couples have to their gay counterparts." Germany's law is one of the best of Europe's same-sex partnership laws, which are victories for lesbian/gay rights. But none of these laws give gays full equality. In particular, none of them give same-sex couples the automatic full parenting rights that straight couples get.

Two women can marry now in Holland, for example, but if they have a child while married the co-mother still has to wait, pay lawyer's fees and go to court to adopt—while a male sperm donor can still block adoption. Even an unmarried straight father doesn't have to wait or pay for an adoption. In Denmark two women can register their relationship, but they're legally barred from artificial insemination services in public hospitals.

Yes, the United States should learn from countries that are years ahead of it on partnership issues. But there are cautionary lessons here too. European lesbian/gay movements rarely chose same-sex marriage as their top priority. Politicians with agendas on their own made this their issue of choice. The US movement could learn from this by thinking again about the basic causes of inequality and the tactics that can address those causes most effectively—issues that some European gay groups are starting to raise through the European Social Forum.

PETER DRUCKER

HEADS PLANTED FIRMLY IN THE SAND

Minneapolis

■ Naomi Klein's "Lookout" column "Mutiny in Manila" [Sept. 1/8], brought to mind my own experiences in the Philippines serving as an enlisted infantryman in the US Marine Corps. In fall 1989 I was awarded a Meritorious Mast for training elite Filipino Marine Corps troops in the art of coordinated live-fire assaults and small-unit tactics. The ostensible purpose of this training was to protect the people of the Philippines from Communist insurgents and other assorted evildoers.

Imagine my surprise when this elite Filipino force attacked the freely elected government of Corazon Aquino immediately after receiving our highly specialized training. The insurrection was defeated by forces loyal to the President in bloody urban combat on the streets of Manila, with considerable loss of life on all sides (including civilians). When I recount this to Americans, the response is either a vacant stare or hostility. Klein is correct: Americans don't want to hear about this. DAVID MAKI

'ON THE MONEY'

Avondale Estates, Ga.

■ Will Hutton's "The American Prosperity Myth" [Sept. 1/8] was brilliant and, pardon the pun, on the money. Hutton defined with facts and precision the gut feeling that led me to my recent decision to abandon my role in the American business machine. I left a job with a comfortable salary to escape eight daily hours of unstimulating and unchallenging work (whose sole purpose seemed to be increasing the wealth of a single, already wealthy individual), and its attendant two-hour commute, to take a chance on my own freelancing business. It may never bring me seven figures, but then again, in European fashion, I believe a business should serve a purpose beyond merely the ruthless (and hollow) pursuit of perpetual profit.

Ultimately, despite being an American, I fall decidedly on the "Old World" side of the maxim "Americans live to work; Europeans work to live." SCOTT T. ANDERSON

Lafayette, Calif.

■ Will Hutton writes that "Ford and GM are a decade behind Volkswagen in the sophistication of their production techniques." If his claim is true, that would be doubly ironic. Volkswagen is still a state-controlled company, despite partial privatization over the past decades. A report issued by the European Investment Bank (Luxembourg) on July 10 states that Volkswagen is "controlled by the state of Niedersachsen (Lower Saxony) and protected by special law." The state of Niedersachsen is Volkswagen's largest shareholder. Apparently public ownership of the means of production is not necessarily bad. WALTER H. DIEBOLD

A WICKED GOOD PLACE, AYUH

Oquossoc, Maine

■ It's terrific that Janwillem van de Wetering writes in praise of Maine, but he trashes the vast noncoastal part of the state and caricatures its

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EDITORIALS

White House Dirty Tricks

As George W. Bush tries to persuade the nation and the world that he knows what he's doing in Iraq, his credibility is undermined by lies and leaks. On the same day that news reports revealed that the House Intelligence Committee's review of prewar intelligence on Iraq found it to be "fragmentary," "circumstantial" and full of "uncertainties," it was reported that the CIA asked the Justice Department to investigate whether White House officials had illegally disclosed the identity of an undercover CIA agent to punish or discredit her husband, former ambassador Joseph Wilson, who challenged the Administration on the war and on its charge that Iraq had sought uranium in Niger. Put those two headline blasts together and you see a White House that wages policy debates dishonestly and uses intimidation to silence opposition.

The leak scandal has the White House on the run. Facing a possible Justice Department inquiry, it responded with desperate spin. Bush takes the issue seriously, White House press secretary Scott McClellan claimed, then noted that Bush had ordered no action in the White House to find out if his aides had made vindictive leaks, which may have violated federal law and undermined the nation's secret counterproliferation efforts. The man who campaigned on the promise that he would "restore" honor and integrity to the White House was willing to sit back and let the Justice Department do all the work. Even after Justice opened a formal criminal investigation, the best Bush could muster was, "Leaks of classified information are bad things."

Can the Justice Department be trusted to probe the White House? The White House and Congressional Republicans—surprise!—say, Sure. Democrats have called for a special counsel. Since the *Washington Post* has reported that "top" White House officials were the leakers, it's obvious that the investigation should not be overseen by Attorney General Ashcroft, who would be conducting an investigation that could compromise his own job. With the independent counsel law long expired, that leaves a special counsel (who has to be appointed by Ashcroft) as the best option.

The White House position, at the outset of the scandal, is that it knows nothing except what's appeared in the media. This flat-out denial means they're hunkering down hoping the storm will pass. But apparently several reporters were fed the information about Wilson's wife—only conservative columnist Robert Novak published it—and they can attest to whether the White House is telling the truth. Protecting the confidentiality of their sources has prevented them, as of this writing, from coming forward.

Meanwhile, the White House continues to insist that it—and the whole world—"knew" that Saddam Hussein had stockpiles of unconventional weapons before the war, falsely citing UN and intelligence assessments. Now the House Intelligence Committee, led by Porter Goss, a Republican and a former CIA case officer, says the prewar intelligence (which Bush had claimed left "no doubt" that Iraq had WMDs) was iffy. If the committee's conclusion is sound, the question is, Did Bush & Co. exaggerate the intelligence, or were they conned by the intelligence community? The Administration dodges the question by clinging to its prewar misrepresentations.

The Bush White House is stuck defending the indefensible (its prewar statements) and denying the indictable (the campaign against the Wilsons). These are heavy burdens to bear as it tries to sell an $87 billion request for Iraq and the deficit hits $500 billion, due in no small part to Bush's tax cuts for the rich. Its house of lies has not yet crumbled, but—drip, drip, drip—there's water in the basement, and it seems to be rising.

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Edward Said

The life of our colleague Edward Said, who died on September 25, brings to mind the words of Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes: "It is required of a man that he should share the passion and action of his time at peril of being judged not to have lived." Born in Jerusalem to a well-off Palestinian family, educated at the best schools in Cairo and the United States, Said could have been content with his distinguished career as a professor of literature at Columbia. But as author of seminal books that factored colonialism into the Western literary canon—including *Orientalism*, one of the most influential works of intellectual history of the past three decades, and *Culture and Imperialism*—he had a larger vision of his place in the world and his responsibilities as an Arab in the West. So he created another life, as a critic of Western imperialism and a champion of Palestinian liberation.

His association with *The Nation* emblemized both his lives. He wrote articles on the Middle East and also served as music critic. He turned his lucid, elegantly erudite prose to interpreting the Palestinian-Israeli struggle. A prolific contributor to publications abroad, he said here in the United States he felt most at home in *The Nation*. That did not mean, however, he agreed with everything the magazine published; when he disapproved of an article or writer on the Middle East, he let the editors know.

He was as passionate about his music criticism—a post serendipitously assigned him by the literary editor, who knew him as a concert-level pianist. His last essay, "Untimely Meditations," on Beethoven (September 1/8), held a deep meaning for him because of the pain, so like his own, the composer lived through in his last years. He regarded art as a creative dialogue with society, hence his efforts with the Israeli conductor and pianist Daniel Barenboim to establish an ensemble of young Israeli and Palestinian musicians. He believed art could serve as a bridge between the two communities.

Said considered the true role of the artist and the intellectual in our times to be "speaking the truth to power, being a witness to persecution and suffering, and supplying a dissenting voice in conflicts with authority." In a 1980 *Nation* article, "Islam Through Western Eyes," he trained the analytical lens of *Orientalism* on present-day imperialism in the West. In a 1981 piece he deplored "the almost total absence of democratic freedoms in the Arab world" and held the Palestinian movement to higher standards of moral and ethical accountability (hence his eventual falling out with Yasir Arafat over his leadership failures and his negotiating of the 1993 Oslo Accord, which Said presciently saw as a Palestinian Versailles). An editor commented that he might best be understood as an exile, an outsider—a free-spirited expatriate first and only secondarily a Palestinian nationalist, which is partly why he ultimately favored a one-state solution.

Despite his radical image, he was courtly, charming, elegantly attired. Being a polemicist did not come easily, and the lashes from political foes hurt and angered him. But he did not let them diminish his prodigious energy for various causes and professional activities—teaching, writing articles and books, lecturing,

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COMMENT

interviews. If you visited him at his book-lined Riverside Drive apartment with its sweeping view of the Hudson, the phone would ring every few minutes, with Edward answering in Arabic or English. Even when the leukemia he resisted for so long sapped his strength, he maintained a punishing schedule of speeches and travel. A friend talked to him a few nights before he died. "It was heartbreaking," she said. "He was so weak he could hardly speak. But he insisted I read his Beethoven piece and was planning to get up early the next morning to work on the proofs of his latest book and write something new."

A great and distinctive voice is stilled, too soon.

COMMENT

Mementos

We gave him cufflinks fashioned out of typewriter keys for his sixtieth birthday. That was almost eight years ago. I had been his editor on political pieces since 1987, but Edward had a way of blurring professional and personal lines, and with my co-conspirator in this gift, Alexander Cockburn, we were comrades, confidants, friends together and apart. I had selected the keys, an exclamation mark and a semicolon, and Alexander made the little speech that night explaining the choice. I can't remember what Alexander said exactly, except that it was brisk and keen-witted, and Edward was charmed as he always was by praise. I don't remember Edward's comments that night either, only his face, the look of expectancy and surprise like that of a boy on his big day being honored for the first time. I do know why those two, out of forty-five possible letters, numbers and symbol combinations, had called out to me, though. The exclamation mark—of course, the exclamation mark! Who knew Edward, who saw Edward for an hour, perhaps an instant, without recognizing the vivid force of the man? Alexander called him "The Lion" because sometimes when he spoke it was as if he were pawing the air, lashing a tail. Of course the exclamation mark. The semicolon is another story altogether. Curiosity of the punctuation world, neither showy nor strictly utilitarian, it is the symbol of unapparent linkages, the iconic gesture casting back at one thought while drawing it forward, finished yet unfinished, into the next. Most people confuse this mark with one of its steady-Eddy relatives; they are not used to thinking contrapuntally.

* * *

Edward didn't use a typewriter or a computer. He wrote in longhand, with a fountain pen. A stack of pages, the words cascading straight across unlined sheets and contained within their writer's self-imposed margins, would be handed off to a loving-exasperated-loving assistant, Zaineb and later Sandra, and returned as typescript. I remember sitting beside him one day, going over galleys of a piece he'd written on the second anniversary of the Oslo Accords. Everything had gone to hell, as he'd predicted on the day of the famous handshake. I never got the feeling Edward took pleasure in the accuracy of his predictions. We'd talk about the situation, what he had and hadn't already committed to paper. His voice was musical in a way, full of questions repeated, of facts and images laid out like urgent evidence, his tone rising and falling as the words followed swiftly, smartly, one upon the other. "So let's add that in," I'd say. And his lovely hand would unscrew the cap of his fountain pen and glide along the page:

> I do not pretend to have any quick solutions for the situation now referred to as "the peace process," but I do know that for the vast majority of Palestinian refugees, day laborers, peasants and town and camp dwellers, those who cannot make a quick deal and those whose voices are never heard, for them the process has made matters far worse....
>
> I have been particularly disheartened by the role played in all this by liberal Americans, Jewish and non-Jewish alike. Silence is not a response, and neither is some fairly tepid endorsement of a Palestinian state, with Israeli settlements and the army more or less still there, still in charge.

For all his erudition, all the easy references to Adorno or Vico or ones more obscure, Edward did not write in the clogged, remote style of the academic. And for all his acquaintance with elites, he had an allergy to power. His objection to the war on Iraq sprang from the same source as his opposition to Zionism and his contempt for Arab despots, including Arafat. He despised Saddam Hussein as he did Ariel Sharon, but could no more countenance the invasion of Iraq than he could support a suicide bombing in Israel. At the same time, he couldn't abide facile equations between criminal desperadoes and the legalized murder machinery of a state. His advice for the engaged individual was remarkably simple. One must concern oneself with human suffering, he insisted. And he drew sustenance from human effort, human resistance, whether in the form of protests against US warmaking or the development of independent politics from the ground up in the new Palestinian National Initiative. As the most prominent advocate for the Palestinian cause, as a Palestinian exile, he was in psychic proximity to one of the most excruciating instances of collective suffering in the postwar period. That this suffering could so often be demeaned or ignored—worse, justified—seemed inconceivable, and yet there it was. Here it is. How could someone not have a restless spirit, a passionate fury? But Edward had more restlessness and passion than most.

I sometimes think he cultivated the ability to savor things—small things like the contrasty form and weight of a cufflink against a smooth cotton shirt or the taste of French dark chocolate, large things like the haunting lines on home and loss by the twelfth-century monk Hugo of St. Victor or the gorgeous agony

Contributions in memory of Edward Said may be sent to:

- Chronic Lymphatic Leukemia Research Fund, LIJMC, Attention: Dr. Kanti Rai, New Hyde Park, NY 11040
- The Friends of Union of Palestinian Medical Relief Committees, Inc., PO Box 450554, Atlanta, GA 31145
- National Conservatory of Music, Birzeit University Fund, c/o K. Fred Ajluni J.D., K&S Mall, 1800 West 14 Mile Road, Suite C, Royal Oak, MI 48073

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COMMENT

of Messiaen's "Quartet for the End of Time"—as a kind of counter to the knowledge of a surreal horror that would not let him rest. But maybe I'm reading too much into it. He once told me, "I was a sensitive boy." Maybe he was just careful enough, and lucky enough, to protect that part of the boy from disappearing into the man. And maybe it was that boy who threw that stone at nothing in particular in South Lebanon, for the sheer wild release of it.

* * *

The best tribute that night of the sixtieth birthday was delivered by Edward's daughter, Najla. A poor chronicler, I don't remember a word she said either, though as I call it to mind now, I'm sure "delivered" is the wrong word. Najla was all arms and legs then, and she uncoiled her stories, her bull's-eye insights and sweet-sly jokes at her father's expense in the same endearing manner as she arched and twisted her limbs. Edward didn't laugh at her jokes the way he laughed at his own, with that staccato Ha-ha! curling up at the end almost to the point of raucous but not quite. No one else laughed like Edward. But on this occasion his enjoyment was different, deeper, dearer. I've always thought that whatever else one might say about a person, if his children like him—not just love but like—he enters some superior category of esteem.

Najla and Wadie liked their father, and he liked them back. And he liked his wife, Mariam, which again is something beyond loving or needing, and he did those as well. He called them "remarkable" the way one would describe a revered friend, not because they were reflections of himself but because they so clearly attracted him with their own light. They seemed always to be together, all four of them, and when Wadie married Jennifer, five. There was something about the uncommon commonness of their togetherness that Edward extended into his friendships and exchanges beyond the family group. He was generous, with his time, with his advice, and generous too in his approach to the world around him. In the breadth of his scholarship and interests, in the precision of his dress and tastes, he was something of a nineteenth-century man, an aesthete, a bit of a dandy. He could be vain, a quality that, his great friend Ben Sonnenberg said, made him "the most delightful person to tease." But he had no wish to be cooped up in rarefied worlds. He loved gossip and low movies (a few years ago he pressed everyone he knew to see *Showgirls*) and seemed endlessly fascinated by the twists of one's amorous affairs. "Really…" he would say, stretching the word out at half-volume upon receiving reports from love's territory. He thrilled to each new discovery of popular culture, even if he was hopelessly behind. Not long ago his daughter wrote a friend that he'd just heard the term "lipstick lesbians" for the first time and, taken with it, decided to try to work it into a conversation at least once a day. I'll never forget the day he told me doctors discovered that the chronic leukemia, which ultimately did him in, had created a tumor in his stomach as well.

"My God, Edward," I said, "it's like the trials of Job."

"I should think it's more like the Perils of Pauline!" he said quickly, and then gave that laugh.

* * *

"He swam in the sea and he wasn't supposed to swim in the sea," Ben said while running through the chronology leading up to the final collapse of Edward's health at summer's end. He had treatments. He'd been weakened. He flew to Spain and Portugal. He swam in the sea. Any one of those things could have pulled the trigger, or all of them, or none of them in particular. While he was alive those who loved him could debate the should he?/shouldn't he? Now that he's gone, every recent risk he took flows into every other one over the dozen years that he spent living to keep from dying. Amid such immense grief it's a fine image to be left with: Edward under a Mediterranean sky, pushing against the waves; "the great man" who wore his greatness lightly.

JoAnn Wypijewski

JoAnn Wypijewski was an editor at The Nation *from 1982 to 2000.*

CALVIN TRILLIN

Reflections on Geopolitics

It seemed like such a good idea.
Oh, when did it begin to sour,
And start to be no fun to be
The last remaining superpower?

Trading Barbs on Trade

ELECTION MATTERS

When Paul Wellstone opted out of the 2000 presidential race, he fretted that trade policy would not be debated in the Democratic primaries and that the party would run a November campaign that failed to address blue-collar concerns about the damage done to the manufacturing sector by the North American Free Trade Agreement and freer trade with China. Wellstone was right to worry; Al Gore and Bill Bradley echoed George W. Bush's free-trade stances, and once Gore was nominated, his failure to distinguish himself on trade undermined his populist appeal to union workers in battleground states like Ohio, Missouri and West Virginia—all of which the Democrats lost for the first time since the 1980s.

What a difference four years makes. In the contest for the 2004 Democratic nomination, no issue except the Iraq war divides Democrats as does trade. Predictably, Joe Lieberman, favorite of the corporate-sponsored Democratic Leadership Council, preaches the Bush line. Yet it is John Kerry, traditionally a more skeptical free trader than Lieberman, who is the noisiest critic of Democrats who oppose "race to the bottom" trade policies that harm workers in the United States and abroad. Desperate to regain ground lost to Howard Dean, Kerry attacked the Vermonter for

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COMMENT

saying trade agreements must be reworked to protect workers and the environment. Dean's approach "would mean we couldn't sell a single car anywhere in the world," Kerry said in Detroit. That's wrong; Dean's stance, which roughly parallels that of the United Auto Workers and most Democrats in Congress, is hardly a recipe for auto-industry decline. Even Bill Clinton told a 2000 World Economic Forum gathering that labor and environmental issues had to be treated more seriously in trade agreements.

What's bizarre about the Kerry-Dean dust-up is that both backed NAFTA in 1993—as did Senators Bob Graham and Carol Moseley Braun. Dean and Kerry also united for normalized trade with China and supported fast-track legislation designed to hasten development of a Free Trade Area of the Americas. Now that Dean is positioning himself to compete in Midwestern states hard hit by factory closings, he complains that "our free trade policies have also had the effect of hollowing out our industrial capacity and, most worrisome, undermining our own middle class." Backers say Dean is evolving. But watch out, Clinton made fair-trade noises while seeking labor endorsements in 1992 only to emerge as NAFTA's champion in 1993.

One thing is certain: Dean's new line is another example of his feeling the pulse of the party. A strong fair-trade stance sets him up to compete with Dick Gephardt, who led House opposition to NAFTA and other Clinton trade deals, for union votes; and with Dennis Kucinich, who marched in the 1999 anti–World Trade Organization protests in Seattle and says he would guide the United States out of NAFTA and the WTO. While Dean has less claim to the "fair trader" mantle than Gephardt or Kucinich, Kerry's attack will help Dean sell himself to unions as the fall-back candidate should Gephardt fade. And what of Wesley Clark? As on so many issues, he's still getting his bearings. Clark said in September, "I believe in fair trade, not free trade. We need labor and environmental standards." But union activists note with concern that the first Clinton Cabinet member signed on to the Clark team was former Commerce Secretary Mickey Kantor, point man for NAFTA.

BEST LINE ON TRADE: "We can't act like just because something is trade, that also makes it right. African-Americans are *here* on a bad trade policy," says the Rev. Al Sharpton.

JOHN NICHOLS

In Fact . . .

GEORGE PLIMPTON

George Plimpton, who died September 25, wore lightly his New York upper-class WASP heritage, but it was the real thing. Scorning entitlements of birth, he followed the young writers' trail to Paris in the 1950s and co-founded *The Paris Review*. Thanks to Plimpton's dedication and perseverance, it survived and continues to set the gold standard for literary magazines. Meanwhile, Plimpton was becoming a celebrity by acting out sports fantasies and writing up his experiences in bestselling books. He played quarterback for the Detroit Lions (*Paper Lion*), joined the PGA circuit (*The Bogey Man*). Though basically nonpolitical, he was a friend of *The Nation*, volunteering to emcee fundraising events. During the Reagan Administration Victor Navasky proposed an article for Plimpton—call it "Paper Attorney General." The idea was, he would use his history as a participatory journalist to wangle a chance to replace Ed Meese for a day. Once in the suite of power, he would issue a proclamation repealing the long list of reactionary policies the Meese Justice Department had imposed. It would have been a great stunt, but the department never got around to giving our friend the green light. Too bad—and sadder still that our friend George is no longer with us.

ARTHUR KINOY

Bruce Shapiro writes: Arthur Kinoy, a friend of and contributor to this magazine, who died on September 19 at age 82, never really believed that lawyers bring about social change. The lesson he took from years in Southern courtrooms fighting segregation and defending civil rights activists was that "legal battles to enforce freedom and equality had potential only when they were intertwined with the daily struggles of black people and their supporters to transform these constitutional promises into reality." Kinoy's early career was shaped by the Communist Party of the Depression years, and a 1950s legal partnership with Frank Donner and Marshall Perlin, which handled key cases of the McCarthy era, including the Rosenbergs' final, failed appeal. But it was in the defense of civil rights groups and local desegregation campaigns—SCLC, Freedom Summer, the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party—that Kinoy helped shape a revolution. In 1966 he helped found the Center for Constitutional Rights, which carries on his fight. In 1972, in a case he argued involving wiretapping of Michigan radicals, a unanimous Supreme Court rejected the Nixon Justice Department's claim that the President holds "inherent power" to disregard the Constitution in defense of national security. The ruling came down a day after the 1972 Watergate break-in; without Kinoy's victory the Watergate prosecutions might never have happened. Today, the Nixon apparatchik who crafted the President's case is Chief Justice, and claims of "inherent power" are again on the rise. Arthur Kinoy's life reminds us that "the abandonment of constitutional government" must never be "fought solely within the confines of the courtroom."

LIVE DEBATE ON THE WEB!

The third in a series of public debates between *The Nation* and *The Economist* will be held on Wednesday, October 8, in Washington. Thanks to a *Nation/Economist/Washington Post Online* collaboration, you can catch a live webcast of the event from 7:30–9 PM EST. On October 7, *The Nation*'s William Greider will face *The Economist*'s Clive Crook in an online pre-debate debate. For both events: www.washingtonpost.com/liveonline. The pre-debate debate will be archived.

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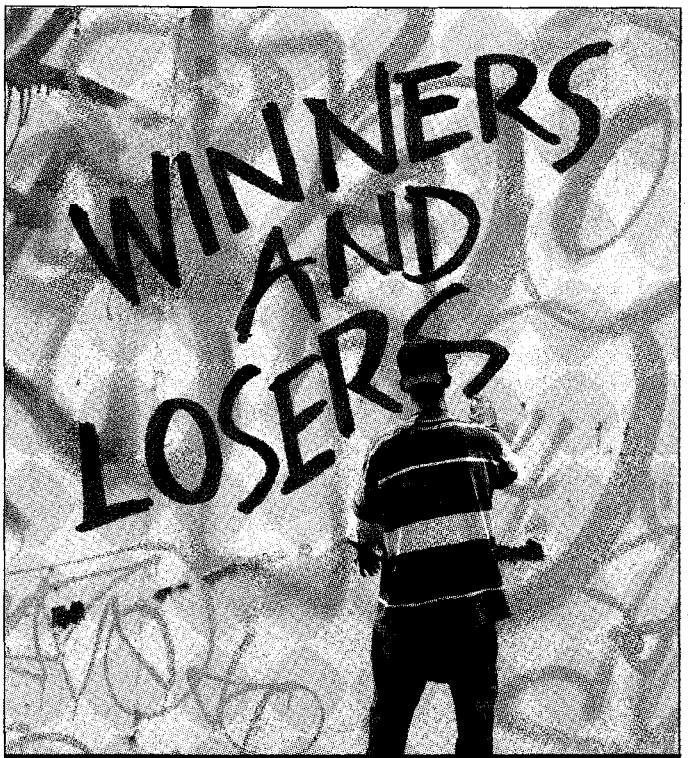

A Debate on the Future of Globalization

Featuring:

Clive Crook
Deputy Editor of *The Economist*

Zanny Minton-Beddoes
Economics Correspondent for *The Economist*

William Greider
National Affairs Correspondent for *The Nation*

Lori Wallach
Director of Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch

Moderated by **Kojo Nnamdi**
of WAMU's *The Kojo Nnamdi Show.*

In cooperation with *The Economist, The Nation,* and WAMU American University Radio.

Wednesday, October 8th, 2003
At the **Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center Amphitheater,**
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7:30 - 9:00 pm

***Free admission**; seating is limited; no reservations.*
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COMMENT

Spanking Head Start

Used to be, nearly everyone—Democrat or Republican—loved Head Start, the federal preschool program for kids from low-income families. And why not? It's one of the most successful government programs of the past forty years. Those familiar with Head Start attribute its effectiveness to just how comprehensive it is. A child in Head Start benefits not only from time in the classroom but also from required parental involvement, healthcare screenings and follow-ups (including vaccinations and dental care), nutritious meals and help with special needs.

This makes sense to anyone who's ever raised children, who tend to get cranky when hungry, spacey when sick and excited when their parents get excited about, say, books. A teacher can read *One Fish Two Fish Red Fish Blue Fish* until she's blue in the face, but if the kid is combating an empty stomach, down with the whooping cough or sorely missing a mother whose energies are directed at simple survival, Dr. Seuss (or any other lessons) will go in one ear and out the other. You have to help the whole kid succeed—especially a kid who is growing up in poverty, who often doesn't get the experiences a middle-class kid takes for granted. Head Start is one of the few federal programs that aim for equality among the socioeconomic classes. Supporting it was a way for politicians of any stripe to declare their commitment to those they saw as the most deserving poor: children.

That's all changed. If George W. Bush and like-minded conservatives have their druthers, the program will be the subject of a huge educational experiment, involving state control and a shift to pure academics. This fall, Congress will decide the fate of Head Start.

Bush isn't giving up the I-love-the-kiddies rhetoric; in fact, he insists, his heart is downright bursting with love and hope for them. "We want Head Start to set higher ambitions for the million children it serves.... There hasn't been a proper focus on the little children," he said. "In my line of work, you see a problem, you address it."

Head Start a problem? That's how Bush & Co. tell it. According to conservatives, too little emphasis on school readiness and too much bureaucracy are holding Head Start—and the children it serves—back. Could it be true? Are we really doing a disservice to already disadvantaged kids? John Boehner, chair of the House education committee, seems to think so. "Head Start's graduates beginning kindergarten are more than 25 percentile points below in average skills like recognizing letters, numbers, shapes and colors. Too many children in Head Start are being left behind."

But if you ask, "Below what? Behind whom?" you'll find a statistical sleight of hand. While Head Start grads are not scoring as well as their more affluent counterparts, they do score higher than kids who come from the same socioeconomic background but who didn't participate in Head Start. Simply put, the program works. And if kids from low-income families aren't scoring as

(Continued on Page 24)

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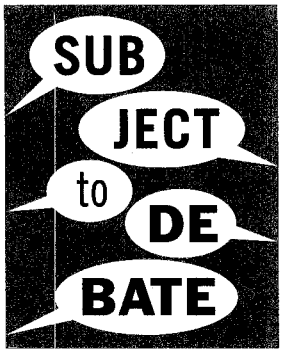
KATHA POLLITT

After You, My Dear Alphonse



What's the matter with conservatives? Why can't they relax and be happy? They have the White House, both houses of Congress, the majority of governorships and more money than God. They rule talk-radio and the TV political chat shows, and they get plenty of space in the papers; for all the talk about the liberal media, nine out of the fourteen most widely syndicated columnists are conservatives. Even the National Endowment for the Arts, that direct-mail bonanza of yore, is headed by a Republican now. Never mind whether conservatives deserve to run the country and dominate the discourse; the fact is, for the moment, they do.

What I want to know is, Why can't they just admit it, throw a big party and dance on the table with lampshades on their heads? Why are they always claiming to be excluded and silenced because most English professors are Democrats? Why must they re-prosecute Alger Hiss whenever Susan Sarandon gives a speech or Al Franken goes after Bill O'Reilly? If I were a conservative, I would think of those liberal professors spending their lives grading papers on *The Scarlet Letter* and I would pour myself a martini. I would *pay* Susan Sarandon to say soulful and sincere things about peace, I would hire Al Franken and sneak him on O'Reilly's show as a practical joke. And if some Democratic dinosaur lifted his head out of the Congressional tarpits to orate about the missing WMDs, or unemployment, or the two and a half million people who lost their health insurance this year, I'd nod my head sagely and let him rant on. Poor fellow. Saddam Hussein was his best friend, after Stalin died. No wonder he's upset.

For some reason right-wingers do not take this calm and broad-minded view. Maybe they didn't get enough love in their childhoods, or maybe they're in more trouble than we know. In any case, they've taken to lecturing the opposition on manners whenever it shows signs of life. Ted Kennedy says the Iraq war was "a fraud made up in Texas" and Bush complains that he's "uncivil." "Not civil," Condoleezza Rice agrees, "not helpful." Well, *excuuuse* me! In *National Review*, Byron York obsesses about anti-Bush websites and the "one long bellow of rage" that is...MoveOn.org? David Brooks, the *New York Times*'s new conservative Op-Ed columnist, mourns the passing of the culture wars, which were about ideas, and wrings his hands over the "vitriol" of the new "presidency wars," which are just about hating Bush as "illegitimate... ruthless, dishonest and corrupt." Exhibit A: Jonathan Chait's eloquent, shrewd and not at all vicious *New Republic* essay on why he hates President Bush (among other things, his triumph is an affront to meritocratic principles—well, it is!). Even Ann Coulter is worried that "the country is trapped in a political discourse that resembles professional wrestling." Gee, is this the same Ann Coulter who wrote that Timothy McVeigh should have driven his truck into the *New York Times* headquarters, whose bestselling polemic *Treason* argues that liberals are Commie-loving traitors who hate America? The Prozac must be working.

As Brooks, at least, acknowledges, the right is in a weak position when it claims to be shocked, shocked, shocked by liberal speech today. Remember when Newt Gingrich blamed Susan Smith's drowning her children on Democrats? ("How a mother can kill her two children, 14 months and 3 years, in hopes that her boyfriend would like her is just a sign of how sick the system is, and I think people want to change. The only way you get change is to vote Republican.") Never mind that Smith had been molested as a young girl by her stepfather, a South Carolina Republican Party activist with close ties to Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition. Remember when Gingrich called the Democratic Party "the enemy of normal Americans," and Dan Burton, chairman of the House Reform Committee, called President Clinton a "scumbag"? (Committee spokesperson Will Dwyer defended this epithet as "straight talk.") During the Clinton years you could turn on the TV and watch Jerry Falwell hawking videos "proving" that Vince Foster was murdered—a view promoted repeatedly by the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page and even entertained by Brooks's *Times* colleague William Safire. (And Foster's was only one of the many murders the President was supposed to have arranged.) You could hear Rush Limbaugh declare, "Bill Clinton may be the most effective practitioner of class warfare since Lenin"—Bill Clinton, the best friend Wall Street ever had!

Ancient history? It was only two years ago that Richard Lessner of the Family Research Council asked in a press release, "What do Saddam Hussein and Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle have in common?" Answer: "Neither man wants America to drill for oil in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge." Just this September, Tom DeLay accused Ted Kennedy of "extremist appeasement," charged that "national Democrat leaders this year have crossed a line and now fully embrace their hostile, isolationist extreme" and called opposition to the Miguel Estrada nomination "a political hate crime." (You'll notice—a small but telling point—DeLay continues the Gingrich-era intentionally rude substitution of "Democrat" for "Democratic.") Coulter's *Treason* sits on the bookshelves alongside right-wing ravings with titles like *Bias*, *The No-Spin Zone* and *Useful Idiots* (in which Mona Charen cites yours truly as "demonstrating the reliable theme of America-loathing that informs much leftist thinking" because I didn't want to fly the flag after 9/11). Very high-minded, very rational!

Well, they wanted state power, and thanks to the Supreme Court Five, they got it. But unfortunately, running the country turns out to be harder than it looked when Bill Clinton was killing off Hillary's lovers between Cabinet meetings. He made it seem so easy! Now, unemployment is way up, the government's awash in red ink, Iraq is a mess. So, everything has to be someone else's fault—mean liberals who really, really want to win in 2004, Osama-loving pranksters who forward e-mail jokes about the President's IQ, Bill and Hillary, still magically pulling the strings three years after leaving the White House, having thoughtfully arranged for 9/11 before they departed.

They can dish it out, but they sure can't take it. ■

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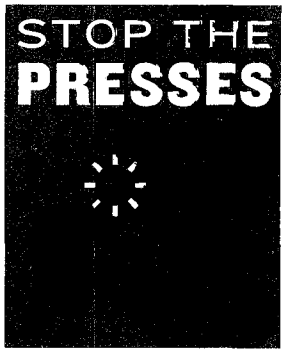
ERIC ALTERMAN

Death and Glory



The premature deaths in the past year of Warren Zevon, Johnny Cash and Joe Strummer ought to be enough to make the most pious among us angry at The Man Upstairs. In our prefabricated popular culture, these three stood out not only as artistic pioneers but also as icons of uncompromised integrity. They reached into our souls because they spoke from their own.

Together with his mates in The Clash, Joe Strummer reinvented rock 'n' roll in the late 1970s by combining punk energy with musical artistry and angry but intelligently politicized lyrics. As the political folksinger Billy Bragg correctly notes, "Were it not for The Clash, punk would have been just a sneer, a safety pin and a pair of bondage trousers."

While never mega-successful commercially, The Clash remain an unanswerable rebuke to those who demand a wall between art and politics. The angrier their songs about imperialism, inequality and institutionalized violence, the higher they soared musically. And while Clash lyrics necessarily simplified issues—they were not, after all, writing essays for *The Nation*—rarely did they oversimplify. On *Sandinista!*, for instance, "Washington Bullets" is actually a backhanded compliment to Jimmy Carter for refusing to intervene to save Nicaragua's Somoza.

But The Clash were more than just rhetorically political. They remained permanently indebted on their royalty statements because they demanded that the triple disc *Sandinista!* be priced at the cost of a single LP. Strummer would have slit his own throat before setting ticket prices at a Stones-style $350. ("Sir Mick"—whose knighthood would also make Strummer wretch—even bragged about the big bucks to *Forbes*.) It wasn't for lack of vision or commitment that Strummer and the band failed to overthrow the structure of a music business that thrives on "turnin' rebellion into money." They fought the law, and the law won.

Warren Zevon fought cancer, and he won. Well, the cancer won too, but not before Warren taught the rest of us a lesson in death with dignity. After he got the bad news, Zevon thanked his friends, hugged his family and created—working in fits and starts as his health would allow—his finest record since his self-titled major-label debut back in 1976. This self-educated son of a Mormon mother and Russian-Jewish gangster father was perhaps the most casually literate lyricist in rock this side of Bob Dylan and Leonard Cohen. How many writers, of any kind, can find inspiration simultaneously in the work of Rilke, Stravinsky, Philip Habib and Boom Boom Mancini?

Zevon's passing, Ry Cooder observed, was "unbelievably sad and unbelievably brave." Brave because Zevon kind of got to attend his own funeral—Huck Finn style. Letterman devoted a whole program to him; Springsteen chartered a jet to appear on the album; Dylan played three of his songs in one show. Sad, because Zevon was too sick to make it to the end of the Dylan show. And because the guy who wrote "I'll Sleep When I'm Dead"—a party animal's paean to imagined immortality—went to bed too early, for once, decades after he had beaten back his various demons and addictions.

A guy whose death makes the cover of both *Time* and *People* doesn't require a *Nation* columnist to sign off on his cultural significance. "Johnny Cash" is a two-word answer to anti-Americanism everywhere. If money and crass commercialism have warped this nation's soul beyond hope, then how is it that this angry, unvarnished truth-teller with a voice filled with gravel became that America's unofficial national poet? Cash, who opposed the war in Iraq, was not noisily political, but his integrity forced him to speak out just the same. This symbol of American patriotism questioned the Vietnam War as he simultaneously entertained the troops in the field and told their story at home. He threw himself into the cause of Native Americans when, at the height of his success in the mid-1960s, he released an album animated by their plight called *Bitter Tears*. The record contains an unforgettable version of "The Ballad of Ira Hayes," a song about a heroic American Indian soldier who helped raise the famous flag at Iwo Jima but died in a haze of alcoholism induced by anti-Indian bias at home. Cash also sang of a US government that "broke the ancient treaty with a politician's grin." Columbia Records did not want to release it, but they did not want to lose Johnny either. It came out and received almost no radio play, leading Johnny to risk career suicide with a full-page ad in *Billboard* accusing record companies of wishing to "wallow in meaninglessness."

Well before Clear Channel's stranglehold on commercial radio, Cash attacked the industry for its "craven worship of the almighty dollar." Despite the inescapable monotone of his voice, he managed to embrace virtually all kinds of music. He introduced Bob Dylan to his country music audience on his TV program in 1969. He sang with U2. He recorded Bruce Springsteen songs and recently had a hit on MTV with one by Nine Inch Nails. He inspired rappers and rockers. And guess what? John Nichols reports that we're about to get Johnny's version of Bob Marley's "Redemption Song," in which he is joined by a one-time mohawked punk named Joe Strummer.

Peter Guralnick reminds us that the hardscrabble cotton farm boy "John Cash" was raised in the federal "colony" of Dyess, Arkansas, "'a social experiment with a socialist set-up, really,' as Cash described it, 'that was done by President Roosevelt for farmers that had lost out during the Depression.'" One of his strongest memories "was the day that Eleanor Roosevelt came to town to dedicate the library." It was in that public library that Johnny Cash learned to love history before deciding, with the help of Sun Records' Sam Phillips, to go make some of his own. And come to think of it, it is the library—as much as the roadhouse or concert hall—that empowered these three very different men to spin personal passion into art, and then back again.

Postscript: I also mourn the passing of my friend and teacher Edward Said. I learned much from his brilliant scholarship, his moral courage and his sparkling conversation. ■

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ARTICLES

ENDANGERED SPECIES OF THE AMERICAN SOUTH

WHAT THE DEMOCRATS MUST DO TO SURVIVE

BY BOB MOSER

Seneca, South Carolina

Early on a steamy Saturday in August, the Democrats in Senator John Edwards's birthplace have gathered for their monthly breakfast in a windowless Rotary Club meeting room, way in back of the Community Restaurant. There are thirty-five of them, a record crowd in recent years. Mostly seniors, mostly white, they carry vivid memories of the fine old days when their native-son presidential candidate was growing up. Back then, Republicans were the ones who huddled in the back rooms of diners, looking like some quaint, outmoded social club that just keeps meeting for no special reason. Nowadays, the Oconee County Republicans have a meeting place of their own, a spacious headquarters just two blocks up North First Street. And it's the Democrats sitting under these royal-blue Rotary banners, staring at that wall mural of Lake Keowee, forking scrambled eggs, trying to stay upbeat.

"Now, some of you folks have got to run for office," says county chairman Charles Hamby, a vigorous protégé of the late bluegrass legend Bill Monroe. These days, Republicans don't just carry the national elections in places like South Carolina; over the past two decades, they've started to take over everything from the state legislature to the coroner's office, and it just keeps getting tougher to find loyal Democrats who are willing to campaign as sure losers. But the main order of this morning's business is next February's presidential primary, a high-profile event that is supposed to lift the sagging spirits of South Carolina Democrats. Coming right after Iowa and New Hampshire, the primary is also supposed to help the national Democrats scare up a candidate who can compete for at least a few of the South's 153 electoral votes; no Democrat has yet won the White House without carrying at least one state from the former Confederacy.

So far, the plan looks like a bust. Six months before voting day, none of the candidates have caught the fancy of Democrats here, or anywhere else in the South. Even the golden boy of the New South Democrats—the man once widely expected to carry the mantle of Carter and Clinton in 2004—cannot gain a toehold in his own backyard. "Of course, we're partial to Edwards," says 76-year-old Maxie Duke, secretary-treasurer of the Oconee Democrats. "But we're not all sold." Along with most of Seneca's remaining Democrats, Duke went to Edwards's 50th-birthday party here in June, a media event staged in front of the house his mill-working daddy and mama rented for $35 a month at the time of his birth. "That was nice and all," Duke says. "He's smart, and he comes across well. But—I don't know. I'm keeping my mind open." For something better to come along? "Well, for *something*."

Something else is here this morning, as it happens. "We were supposed to have a guy from the Kerry campaign," chairman

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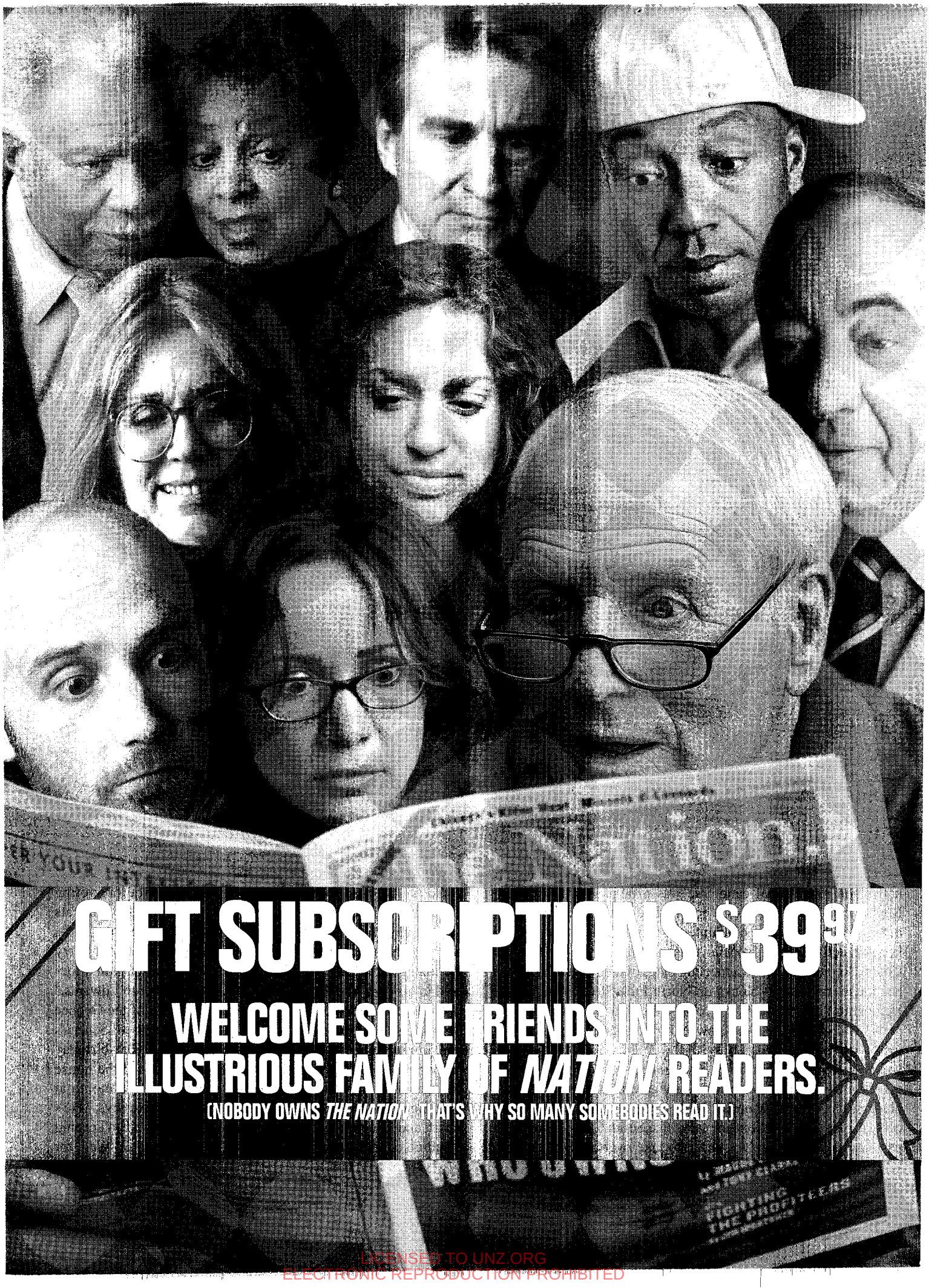
GIFT SUBSCRIPTIONS $39.97
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Hamby is saying, "but he had to fly off to Washington. Guess we'll excuse him for that. But we do have—what was your name?—from the Lieberman campaign." The Connecticut senator's rosy-cheeked state director for South Carolina grins and whispers up to Hamby, "Barry Butler." "OK," Hamby says, "Barry Butler will talk to us now."

In early polls, Joe Lieberman has looked like Edwards's main competition in South Carolina. But the Oconee Democrats don't even bother to applaud for his man. Even in a rural county with just 67,000 souls, the candidates and their flacks have become a regular fixture. And more often than not, they tend to say things that show they don't understand the South a whole lot better than the national Democratic Party.

"As you've seen in the papers, we've lost a lot of textile jobs here," Butler informs the inhabitants of this former textile village, all of whom passed boarded-up mills and rusted-out warehouses on their way to breakfast this morning. Worse, when he's asked whether Lieberman will be showing up in person in Oconee, Butler replies, "Oh, yes, we're trying to get him out into these rural counties."

These rural counties. Lieberman's man has neatly, albeit unwittingly, summed up the Democrats' troublesome attitude toward the South. And it is no small trouble. Not even Edwards, who seems to carry the South deep in his bones, has figured out a message that might carry a state in Dixie—this year, or any year in the foreseeable future.

'I feel like people don't think I'm an important person, you know, because "She's a Democrat."'
—Maxie Duke

After the Oconee Democrats are finished confounding Lieberman's flack with sophisticated questions about Iraq, homeland security and Chinese imports, the breakfast breaks up and folks start to drift away. After counting up the morning's proceeds—$240, not bad—Duke rests her elbows on a folding table and sighs. "I feel inferior sometimes," she says. "I feel like people don't think I'm an important person, you know, because 'She's a Democrat.'"

It wasn't always like that. While she taught high school, Duke's late husband, a druggist in town, served as county sheriff for sixteen years. Democratic, of course. "You've got to understand: Oconee County has always been Democratic." She corrects herself. "Was always Democratic. Till about 1980, the Reagan years. The religious right started controlling things then, and all of a sudden if you didn't espouse the Bible the whole time, you were immoral and you couldn't win." When South Carolina Democrats lost one of their last vestiges of power, with the defeat of Governor Jim Hodges in 2002, Duke saw it as one last nail in her party's coffin. "We've got to get connected with the national party again. But they just don't seem to care. It's going to take us an awful long time to come back up to where we're a serious threat, really a viable party."

How long? "I said fifty years after the last election," Duke says, studying her hands. She looks up, her blue eyes brightening for a moment. "But maybe it won't take that long. What comes around goes around. Doesn't it?"

Bob Moser, a former John S. Knight Fellow at Stanford University, is a writer living in Montgomery, Alabama.

Three days later, a short hop down the road in the prosperous city of Greenville, John Mellencamp's "Small Town" throbs through the late-afternoon swelter of a lakeside pavilion. A mostly white crowd of 150 rises and claps politely as the man who must win South Carolina comes beaming and handshaking down the center aisle.

"Not bad!" whispers Jenni Engebretsen, Senator Edwards's new press person in South Carolina. As Engebretsen smiles out at the audience half-filling the pavilion, more than 10,000 are massing in New York's Bryant Park to cheer Howard Dean, the blue-state Democrat. With Edwards's poll numbers stagnant and rumors flying about another "electable" Southerner, Gen. Wesley Clark, jumping into the race, optimism has become a precious commodity in the Edwards campaign.

Two summers ago, Seneca's native-son senator had all the makings of the next big thing, his national poll numbers shooting into double digits as *People* declared him America's sexiest politician and pundits declared him the second coming of Bill Clinton, *sans* bimbos—the lone Democrat whose Piedmont drawl and New South moderation could give George W. Bush a run for his money. After all, no Democrat from outside the South had occupied the White House since John F. Kennedy. Edwards had to be a winner. Or else.

But Edwards's campaign has sputtered since then. On his late-summer swing through his home turf, it's easy to see why. While his diagnoses of America's ills can be just as incisive as Dr. Dean's—"We've got two separate school systems now: one for the haves, and one for the have-nots"—Edwards's prescriptions are congenitally mild, and all too familiar. Like the Patients' Bill of Rights, a baby-step healthcare reform measure he shepherded through the Senate with John McCain and Ted Kennedy, Edwards's proposals are catchy but cautious, chipping away at big domestic quandaries while "restoring fiscal discipline" and lifting all boats with a balanced budget. It's the message that New South Democrats have been stuck on for the past two decades: jobs, schools, equality, frugality. And a fresh-faced messenger doesn't make it sound any less stale.

Today, as Democrats fan themselves furiously with Edwards's "Real Solutions for America" booklets, the other deficiency that has stuck the senator from North Carolina at around 10 percent in the South Carolina polls also looms. "Let me say a word about Iraq," Edwards says. And indeed, aside from noting that "this should be an international effort, not an American effort," a word is just about all the candidate has to say about Iraq—or any other foreign policy matter. The pundits began to tune out Edwards after he awkwardly fumbled foreign-policy questions on *Meet the Press* last May. Progressive Democrats, North and South, began to write him off after he voted for the Iraq war resolution.

A typical scene had unfolded the previous night, when Edwards spoke at a union hall in Charleston. "Why are we in Iraq?" an elderly man demanded to know. "We lied to get there—what kinds of lies are we gonna have to tell to get out?" Confronted with such raw evidence of Americans' growing frustration, Edwards's glittering self-confidence tends to give way to teeth-

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grinding hesitancy. But his problems go deeper than a lack of foreign-policy savvy. "He's much too moderate for 2004," says Don Aiesi, who teaches and studies politics at Greenville's Furman University. "People are so stressed, they're not buying moderation. Voters in South Carolina might be conservative on the whole, but not the ones who'll be voting in this primary. They want Bush the hell out of there, and they're reacting more ideologically in response to the Republicans. That moderate message—I don't know who's listening to it."

Edwards is in a mess of trouble, and his campaign's quandary goes straight to the heart of what's killing off the Democratic Party throughout the South—and just might kill off any hope the party has of unseating Bush next year.

Forty years ago, Southern Republicans were even more down in the mouth than the Democrats are today. Town halls, state houses, governors' mansions, Washington, DC—everywhere you looked, Democrats ruled. It had been the same old story since Reconstruction: Democrats won with their juggernaut of Southern Baptists, ruling-class whites and anybody else who wanted to be respectable and relevant. By contrast, the party of Lincoln staggered along, trying in each election to cobble together a winning coalition out of white moderates and uninspired black folks—the ones who could vote, that is.

For every black voter who came into the Democratic Party after 1964, at least two white voters have switched to the GOP.

Now Southern Democrats have landed smack in the same dilemma. After three decades of staying barely alive behind moderates like Carter, Clinton, Gore and Edwards, the Democrats' defensive strategy—"we're like Republicans, but different"—was dealt a serious blow in 2000, when Gore lost every Southern state (if you count Florida), and again in 2002, when the Democrats suffered even greater statewide losses. Three of the South's remaining Democratic governors—all of them New South moderates—were tossed out of office last year. In South Carolina, if incumbent Governor Hodges could have inspired just one-third of the state's voting-age but unregistered black voters to come to the polls—there are upwards of 260,000—he would have won with votes to spare. But as Don Aiesi points out, "Democrats here are giving black voters no reason to bother. Of course, they're not giving white voters much of a reason, either."

On paper, the party-registration numbers are far from disastrous. But the electoral reality is bleak. "A Democratic presidential candidate could run a perfect campaign here, do absolutely everything right," says Aiesi, "and the best you could hope for is 45 percent. That's true in most of the South."

How did it happen? For one thing, Lyndon Johnson was right. When the Texas Democrat pushed the Civil Rights and Voting Rights acts through Congress in 1964 and 1965, he told an aide that he had just "delivered the South to the Republican Party for a long time to come." LBJ turned out to be a better prophet than Jeremiah. "For every black voter who came into the Democratic Party after 1964," says Aiesi, "at least two white voters have switched to the Republicans over time."

Of course, the Democrats haven't lost the South simply because white supremacists made the switch. "The Republicans have done a terrific job of convincing people they've got a lock on morality, truth and the American way," says Roger Finch, a longtime labor activist in Greenville.

That's partly because conservative churches have grown into a formidable political force. "Forty years ago, religious fundamentalists believed in separation of church and state," Aiesi notes. "They were mostly Democrats, but they generally kept out of politics. Now the marriage of politics and soul in the South is closer than ever—conservative values, God's values, Republican values. And they have more support now on the national level than conservative Southern Democrats ever did. Strom Thurmond and the Dixiecrats had to stand alone a lot of the time. With the national trend toward conservatism, Southern Republicans are in the driver's seat."

That influence lures nonideological Southerners—"the martini-drinkers," Aiesi calls them—into the Republican fold. Among them are Northern professionals who flocked south during the economic expansion of the previous two decades, looking for better jobs, lower costs of living and temperate places to retire. The vast majority of Yankee transplants vote Republican, Finch says, for two main reasons. "One, they don't want to pay taxes; that's partly why they've moved here. Two, they like keeping up with the Joneses. Being Republican in the South is keeping up with the Joneses."

The New South Democrats' response to this sea change has been a tepid stew of moderate issues designed to attract suburban swing voters. They might offer heartfelt tributes to Martin Luther King Jr. in one black church after another, but their message is tailored to sway nonideological whites. "They spend 95 percent of the time trying to sway white moderates and even conservatives," says Willie Legette, a longtime progressive activist who teaches politics at South Carolina State University. "There's only one message the Democrats have been sending loud and clear: 'We're no longer the party concerned with reducing racial and class inequalities.' They're battling to show that they will further the interests of white people who already vote."

When the Republicans nominate a dud—like Senator Lauch Faircloth, the pallid Jesse Helms wannabe dispatched by Edwards in '98—the strategy can work. New South Democrats have pulled off occasional victories by bringing out a decent black vote and "convincing conventional voters that a particular Republican is the bogyman," Legette says. "But they don't offer anything positive, especially for working-class voters who are supposed to be the party's base."

Even if Edwards, Senator Bob Graham or Wesley Clark can conjure up a way to win South Carolina next February 3, their species—New South Democrats—will still be as doomed and outmoded as its Republican predecessor four decades back. While the Republicans continue to build on their strength in the South, the Democrats continue to fade into irrelevance. They need fresh ideas. They need—bizarre as it sounds—a Barry Goldwater.

The day before the 1964 presidential election, the insurgent Republican senator from Arizona chose to make his final cam-

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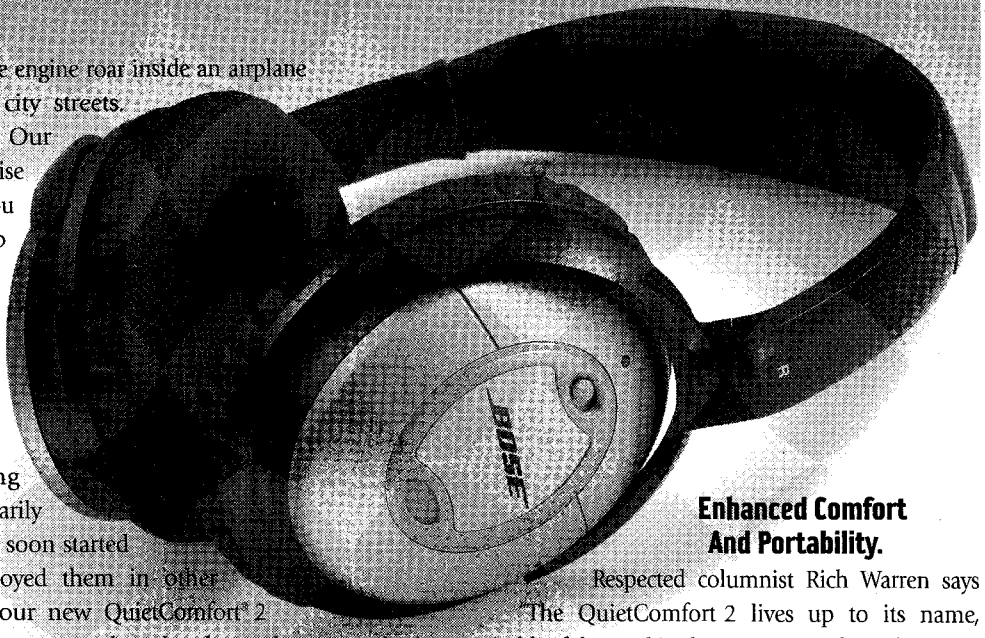

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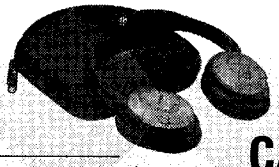

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paign stop in Columbia, South Carolina. Matched against a popular President leading the ticket of America's dominant party, Goldwater knew he stood no chance of winning the election. Instead, he stood at a podium in the heart of Dixie, flanked by Strom Thurmond and other prominent segregationists, culminating his unlikely campaign to breathe life into the Southern GOP.

Though the results the next day looked disastrous—Lyndon Johnson racked up the largest percentage of the popular vote in American history—Goldwater broke through in five Southern states. He did it not only by nodding and winking at racists like Thurmond, but by embracing something that Southerners had felt in their guts since long before the Civil War: distrust of the federal government. "Forced integration," Goldwater liked to tell his admirers in Dixie, "is just as wrong as forced segregation."

By making the states' rights argument, the Republicans had finally latched on to an idea that resonated with conservatives in the South. Helped along by the rise of Christian politics and the influx of Northern professionals, the Southern GOP was on its way to turning the tables on the mighty Democrats. Like many Southern progressives, Willie Legette sees only one long-term hope for a Democratic remedy—conjuring up what Goldwater gave the GOP in 1964, "a choice, not an echo."

So far, Legette says, "the Democrats are not offering any meaningful choice. The candidates are not taking a vision to the public about what the government can do and should do for people." When the Democrats do talk about the issues that matter to working-class folks, he says, the folks tend to roll their eyes. "Whatever these candidates say about better education, people are not convinced they'll have better schools. How many times have they been told the exact same things before, while the schools get worse? Same with healthcare."

That's especially problematic because Republicans in the South are increasingly vulnerable on kitchen-table issues. Even in the "economic miracle" state of South Carolina, manufacturing jobs seem to disappear by the day. In the hardest-hit industries, textile executives and workers who voted for Bush in 2000 have been angrily vowing to turn their backs on the President in 2004.

Bush's policies are also "going to galvanize the Democratic base," says Legette. The question is whether the Democrats are ready to capitalize. Can they galvanize their own Southern base—or, perhaps more accurately, rebuild it? The formula is far from complicated: Invigorate black voters sick of the same old rhetoric and same old promises. Use bold economic proposals to win back white working-class voters who've responded to the Republicans' success in making Southern elections hinge on God, guns and Confederate flags. And then, once you've revived that populist spirit—which still animates Southerners just as much as states' rights—you can get to work on the moderates. The New South Democrats, and their cheerleaders in the Democratic Leadership Council, have had it precisely backward.

Where is the Democratic Goldwater ready to lead a revival? So far, nowhere in sight. "Nobody's making a strong argument for strategic change except Lieberman, who says the party must move farther right to compete in the South," says Aiesi. "But trying to beat the Republicans at their own game, as Southern Democrats keep finding out, is a great way to lose."

That message appears to be similarly lost on John Edwards and Bob Graham, waving the drooping banner of New South moderation. Meanwhile, Al Sharpton's appeal to the white working class does not even look as strong as Greenville native Jesse Jackson's, and Howard Dean has awkwardly tried to speak to black voters in the South with tired clichés about race relations.

Wesley Clark's entry into the race on September 17, which cannily stole the thunder from Edwards's "formal announcement" the day before, was the year's first encouraging news for Southern Democrats. Potentially encouraging, that is. On foreign policy, the four-star general from Arkansas is admirably positioned for both the Southern primaries—with his outspoken opposition to Bush's formula for "fighting terror"—and for the general election, where his iron-jawed patriotism would make Southern swing voters more likely to trust his critique of Bush's Middle East adventures.

Where is the Democratic Barry Goldwater ready to lead a revival of the party in the South? So far, nowhere in sight.

But in the South, just as in the rest of America, domestic issues are where the rubber will meet the road in the Democratic primaries. If the folks who are most excited by his campaign—DLC operatives and former Clinton and Gore advisers who've leapt on Clark's bandwagon—have anything to say about it, the telegenic general will likely end up sounding a lot like Edwards, who sounds a lot like Clinton. If Bush continues to flounder, the Man from NATO's personal magnetism could conceivably overcome that liability—and turn New South moderation into a winning general-election formula for 2004, capturing a few Southern states while holding on to the blue states. But that kind of Clark victory would leave Southern Democrats stuck in echo mode—the same strategy that has been bleeding the party dry for the past forty years.

Early this year, John Kerry infuriated the "me too" Democrats by openly questioning the conventional wisdom that the party cannot afford to lose the entire South in 2004. True, a Republican sweep of the South would set the bar awfully high—a Democrat who lost the South as badly as Al Gore would have to win more than 70 percent of the remaining electoral votes. But Kerry did have a point: It's possible. It's also possible that a fresh populist message might be the only recipe for reviving the Democratic Party in the South—even if it means losing all eleven states next year.

Meanwhile, as Clark takes a crash course on social issues, the other Democratic contenders troop across South Carolina, quoting Martin Luther King Jr. in black churches, posing with grimaces in front of shut-down textile plants and hawking penny-wise plans for better healthcare and better schools. Until the party stumbles on a Goldwater of its own, Maxie Duke might start to look like an even wiser prophet than LBJ: "fifty years," sighed the Democrat from Seneca. ■

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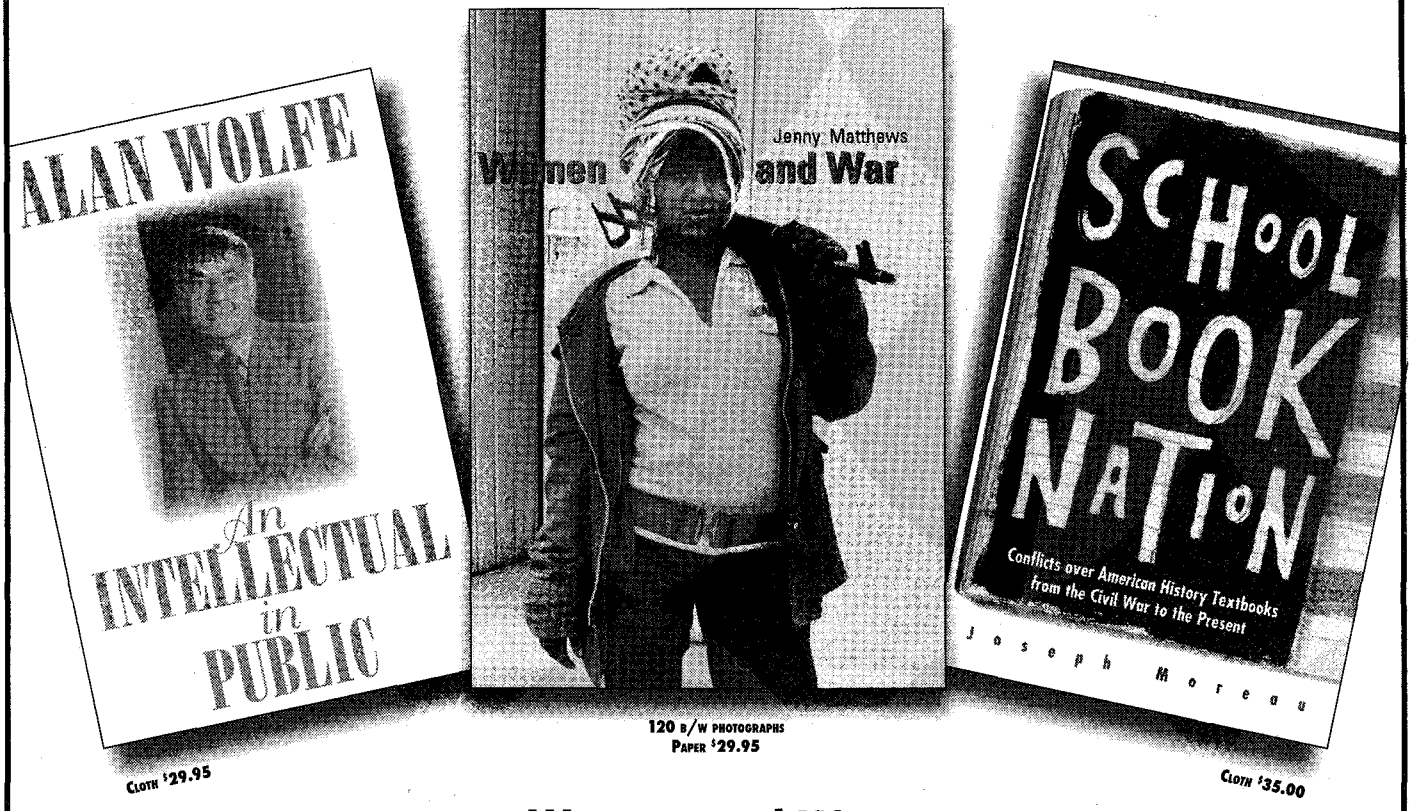

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THE GOP EMBRACE OF HOMOPHOBIA IS MORE THAN SIMPLY A SOP TO THE FAR RIGHT—GIVEN THE BACKLASH AGAINST GAY MARRIAGE, IT'S SHREWD POLITICAL STRATEGY.

TIM LANE

Republicans Relaunch the Antigay Culture Wars

DOUG IRELAND

As George Bush's poll numbers began seriously dwindling, Karl Rove and the White House political strategists decided to reach into their bag of tricks and come up with a good old staple of reactionary politics: homophobia.

The decision to scapegoat gay and lesbian Americans was poll-driven by an antigay backlash that gathered steam in the wake of the Supreme Court's June 26 decision, in *Lawrence v. Texas*, striking down laws making gay sex between consenting adults illegal—the so-called sodomy laws. The backlash first surfaced in a July 25–27 Gallup poll. It showed that support for legalizing gay sex had plummeted a dramatic twelve points, to only 48 percent, down from a comfortable 60 percent in favor of legalization in Gallup's May survey. Those saying "homosexuality should be considered an acceptable lifestyle" also slalomed down from 54 to 46 percent; and support for same-sex civil unions dropped from 49 to 40 percent. Two weeks later, a *Washington Post* poll showed that support for gay civil unions had dropped three points lower than in Gallup's. Since then, five other national polls have confirmed the antigay trend.

Just two days after Gallup released its poll showing the backlash, Bush unexpectedly used a Rose Garden press conference to announce that he'd assigned lawyers to come up with a plan to stop gay marriage. Bush and the Republicans had been under enormous pressure from the Christian right and social conservatives—including *National Review* and *The Weekly Standard*—to support a Federal Marriage Amendment to the Constitution, which would ban recognition of any form of marriage between two persons of the same gender. (The FMA would also forbid giving same-sex couples the "legal incidents" of marriage, thus vitiating the civil-union law in Vermont and any other state that followed suit.)

The GOP had already signaled it would respond to that pressure and use gay marriage as a wedge issue against the Democrats in the Congressional elections when, not long before Bush's Rose Garden declaration, Senate Republican majority leader Bill Frist declared on *This Week* in June that he would "absolutely" support the FMA. Frist's declaration was no go-it-aloner's gaffe: It was made "with no-fingerprints support from the White House," as Howard Fineman and Debra Rosenberg reported in *Newsweek*.

Since then, the Republicans have ratcheted up their anti–gay marriage crusade. On July 29 the Senate Republican Policy Committee adopted a twelve-page policy paper declaring that gay marriage was a "threat" to the established social order. Then, Senate Judiciary subcommittee chairman John Cornyn of Texas—declaring that "we must do whatever it takes" to stop same-sex unions—held formal hearings on the gay marriage issue on September 4 (in the House, where the FMA already has eighty-nine co-sponsors, similar hearings are expected this fall). These hearings are being held even though Congress, by overwhelming majorities in both houses, in 1996 passed the antigay Defense of Marriage Act, which Bill Clinton signed into law (the DOMA denies federal recognition and benefits to same-sex marriages and allows states to deny recognition of such unions performed in other states). However, Cornyn's staff produced a gaggle of witnesses echoing Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia's dissent in *Lawrence v. Texas*, in which he warned that the majority's ruling would dismantle "the structure…that has permitted a distinction to be made between heterosexual and homosexual unions." Among those Cornyn called to

Doug Ireland, a columnist for TomPaine.com and a longtime Nation *contributor, has written extensively on gay political issues.*

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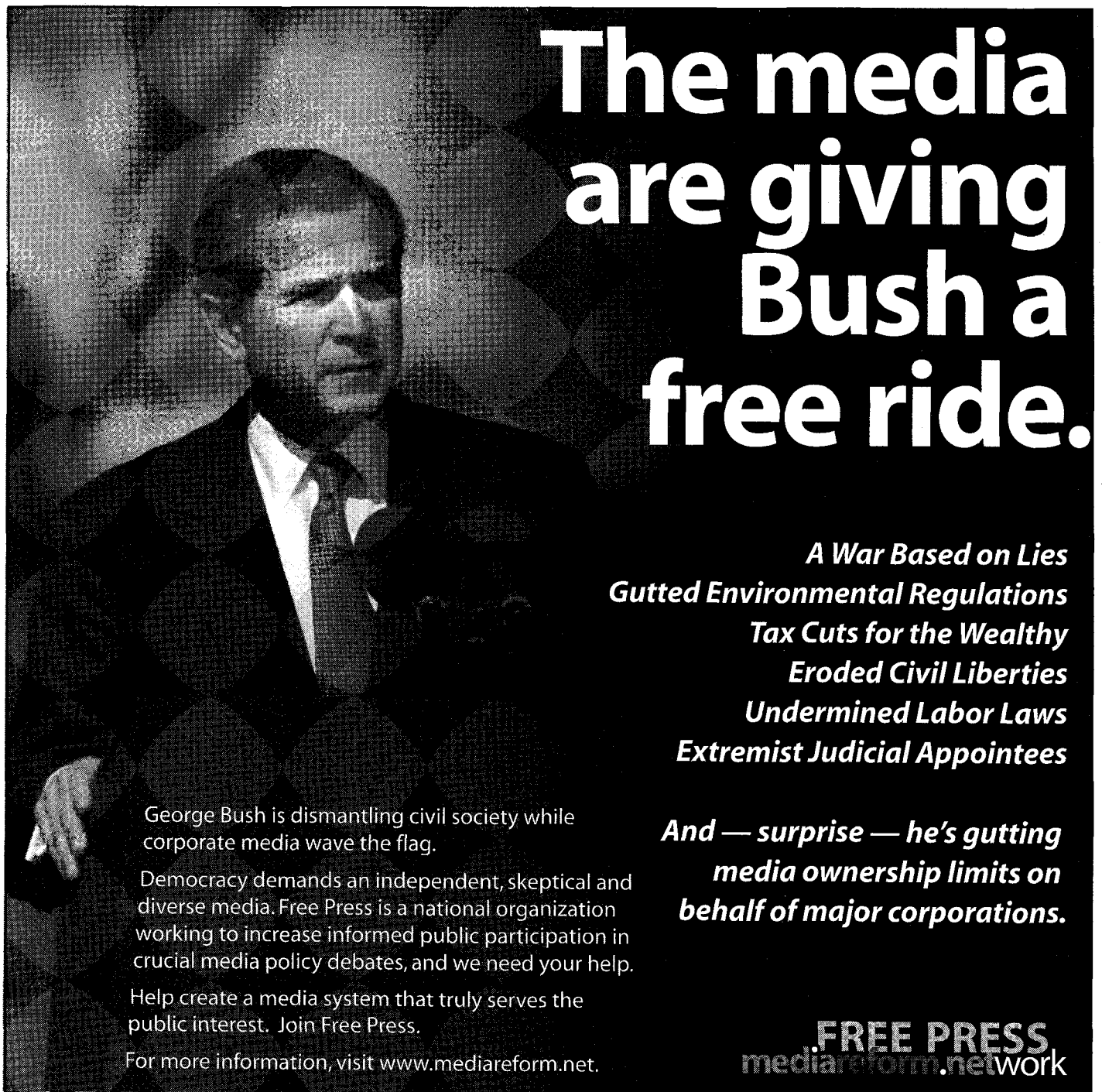

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Judgment Day

The antigay bias that permeates the Republican Party can be clearly seen in Bush's judicial appointments. Among the unalloyed homophobes Bush has nominated for the federal bench:

JAY BYBEE: US Court of Appeals, 9th Circuit: As attorney for the Defense Department (in a case involving higher security clearances for gay military contractors than for non-gay ones), Bybee argued that gays and lesbians were "emotionally unstable."

MICHAEL McCONNELL, US Court of Appeals, 10th Circuit: As lead attorney for the Boy Scouts of America, McConnell argued that the Scouts' exclusion of gays was comparable to its policy of excluding alcoholics and substance abusers.

CHARLES PICKERING, US Court of Appeals, 5th Circuit: Pickering has said, "We as Southern Baptists should lead the way in strengthening traditional moral values," and that society has been degraded by such things as pornography, divorce and homosexuality.

TIM TYMKOVICH, US Court of Appeals, 10th Circuit: As Colorado's Solicitor General, he vigorously argued before the Supreme Court in favor of the state's Amendment 2, prohibiting localities from enacting laws against antigay discrimination. He wrote that homosexuality was "*contra bonos mores*, i.e., immoral," and compared same-sex love to "sadomasochism, cockfighting, bestiality, suicide, drug use, prostitution, and sodomy." The Court, in the landmark *Romer v. Evans* (1996) case, overruled him.

CLAUDE ALLEN, US Court of Appeals, 4th Circuit: As Deputy Health and Human Services Secretary, Allen was the *bête noire* of AIDS service organizations, having led a witch hunt threatening to cut their funding after some of their members staged a noisy demonstration on Bush's AIDS policies during his boss Tommy Thompson's speech at the Barcelona International AIDS Conference last year. As Virginia's health commissioner, Allen cooked up a no-condoms, abstinence-only AIDS plan in cahoots with the religious right. And as a former top aide to Jesse Helms, Allen alleged that Helms's 1984 opponent, Governor Jim Hunt, had links "with the queers."

MIKE MOSSMAN, US District Court for Oregon: As a young conservative clerk to Supreme Court Justice Lewis Powell, Mossman lobbied him successfully to change his vote in *Bowers v. Hardwick* (1986) and uphold Georgia's sodomy law in a case involving two men arrested in a private home for consensual sex. This landmark decision stigmatized gays for a decade (Powell later said he regretted changing his vote).

BILL PRYOR, US Court of Appeals, 11th Circuit: As Alabama Attorney General, Pryor filed a brief in the Texas sodomy case in favor of the law, arguing that a constitutional right that protects the choice of one's partner and "'whether and how to connect sexually' must logically extend to activities like prostitution, adultery, necrophilia, bestiality, possession of child pornography, and even incest and pedophilia." (Senate Democrats succeeded in forcing withdrawal of Pryor's name by threatening a filibuster.) —D.I.

testify, for example, was former Texas solicitor general Gregory Coleman, who argued that "it is likely" that the US Supreme Court will hold DOMA unconstitutional in the near future. (Another GOP witness, syndicated Murdoch columnist Maggie Gallagher, went so far as to write that "polygamy is not worse than gay marriage, it is better"!) Indeed, many legal scholars have argued forcefully that the federal DOMA violates the "full faith and credit" clause of the Constitution, which provides that states cannot ignore other states' proceedings but must recognize them and put them into effect. In that context, all the electorally motivated demagogy coming out of the Rose Garden and the Cornyn hearings creates momentum behind the proposed antigay constitutional amendment.

At the state level, too, Republican antigay initiatives are snowballing. In Wisconsin, despite the fact that state law already bans same-sex marriage, forty-nine legislators—saying the existing statute is "too vague"—have introduced a new Defense of Marriage Act with even tougher language, and it took less than a minute for the Wisconsin Assembly's Judiciary Committee to pass it 6 to 0 on September 11. Michigan Republicans are introducing a similar bill in the State Senate. In Ohio thirty-two Republicans and one Democrat introduced a "super-DOMA" on September 9 that would ban civil unions and domestic partnership benefits for gay couples as well as same-sex marriage. In Colorado, House Republican majority leader Keith King is behind a resolution in favor of the FMA. And in Massachusetts a Republican-sponsored state constitutional amendment banning civil unions and gay marriage is being pushed by a Democrat, powerful House Speaker Thomas Finneran, a social conservative. More gay-bashing legislation is expected to be introduced at the state level soon. Democrats voting against bills like these will find those votes used to try to defeat them; and, given the current climate of backlash, how many from marginal seats will stand up and say no to such measures?

Remember how the Republicans' subliminal gaybaiting evoked the specter of the "San Francisco Democrats" after the party held its national convention there in 1984? Well, one can expect attacks on the "Boston Democrats" next year if, as many Bay State legal prognosticators believe is likely, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court rules in favor of the plaintiffs in a lawsuit arguing that banning gay marriage violates the state Constitution (a decision is expected any day—and a similar case is working its way toward the New Jersey Supreme Court). "If the Massachusetts decision goes our way," says National Gay and Lesbian Task Force executive director Matt Foreman, "there's no way the right won't make it a huge issue in '04—the backlash against such a decision would make gay marriage *the* defining social issue" in next year's elections. Already, GOP National Committee chairman Ed Gillespie, in a September 23 *Washington Times* interview, predicted that the party's platform next year would probably include support for the constitutional amendment. Gillespie turned up the antigay rhetoric, accusing gay activists of "religious bigotry" and "intolerance" in demanding equal marriage rights. And the *Denver Post*'s Washington bureau has not been alone in predicting that if the Massachusetts court rules in favor of same-sex unions, Bush will then flat-out endorse the FMA.

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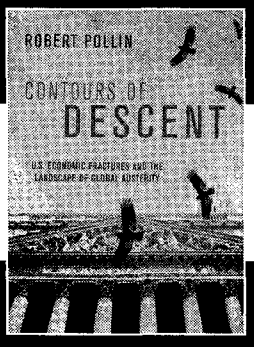

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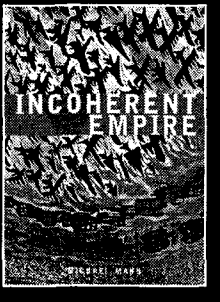

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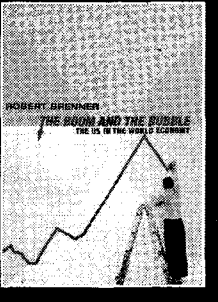

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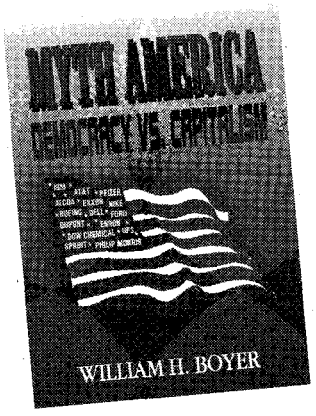

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Make no mistake: The Bush Administration has been feeling the heat from the conservative ultras. "The far right wants a civil war in the Republican Party," says Patrick Guerriero, a former Melrose, Massachusetts, mayor who is the new national head of the Log Cabin Republicans (LCR), a GOP gay group. "It's very clear from all the signals coming from the far right that they want to take the GOP back" to the culture wars trumpeted at the 1992 Republican National Convention, Guerriero says, "on gay marriage and other culture issues that appeal to their fundraising base." The Rev. Jerry Falwell recently announced that he will devote all his time and energy to opposing gay marriage and campaigning for the FMA; the Traditional Values Coalition has been sending out 1.5 million pieces of mail a month on the gay marriage issue; and addicts of Christian and conservative radio have been treated to daily diatribes against gay marriage from the likes of Focus on the Family's James Dobson, who has more radio listeners than CNN has viewers, and the Rev. Donald Wildmon's American Family Association, which has 200 affiliated Christian radio stations.

The thirteen states in which "sodomy" laws were struck down by the Supreme Court were all states that Bush carried in his first election. But the Republicans' decision to embrace political homophobia anew is more than simply a sop to the Christers and the far right—given the antigay backlash, it's shrewd political strategy. Karl Rove never tires of pointing out that 4 million of the 19 million evangelical Christians didn't vote in 2000. With 2004 shaping up as another close election, Rove & Co. want to energize the Christian-right base to which Bush is already so heavily indebted (it motored his 2000 primary victories against John McCain) and insure a maximum turnout among the AWOL evangelicals and other Christian traditionalists.

Pushing the antigay hot button is also designed to help the Republicans increase their Congressional majorities. Most of the open or marginal Senate seats are on turf where the gay marriage issue undoubtedly helps Republicans. In Georgia, where nominal Democrat Zell Miller is retiring, a Zogby poll in August showed that two-thirds of the state's voters oppose same-sex unions. In North and South Carolina, where John Edwards and Fritz Hollings have decided not to seek re-election, a Carolinas Poll of the two states sponsored by the *Charlotte Observer* and released September 14 showed a 3-to-1 opposition to legal recognition of same-sex unions. Then there's Alaska, which has already passed, by referendum, a state constitutional amendment banning gay marriage; Florida, where Representative Mark Foley was forced to abandon his GOP primary campaign for US Senate because of negative voter reaction to a local newspaper story alleging he was gay; and Illinois, where half the electorate is rural or suburban and the urban areas are heavily Catholic. (Following the Pope's recent ukase demanding that all Catholics oppose gay marriage and gay civil unions, the US Conference of Catholic Bishops on September 10 endorsed the Federal Marriage Amendment. No doubt the bishops will follow their counterparts in Canada—where Jean Chrétien's government is supporting making gay marriage legal—in denouncing progay politicians from the pulpit.) In the House, only sixty Congressional seats are considered in play by the National Committee for an Effective Congress—and almost all of them are in rural,

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suburban or exurban districts infinitely less gay-friendly than urban areas, districts in which nuclear-family NASCAR Dads and Soccer Moms are susceptible to antigay appeals.

There is evidence of antigay backlash even in California. It has always been a staple of gay political strategy that as more and more gay people came out of the closet to their friends, neighbors and workmates, social acceptance of same-sexers would rise. But despite the fact that California has large numbers of out gays all over the state, a Field Poll released August 29 showed that half the voters there oppose the idea of gay marriage—and 42 percent favor the FMA. Homophobia was already deployed by the GOP in the Big Enchilada's recall, which was financed by notorious homophobe Representative Darrell Issa. "It's a major motivating force," says Geoffrey Kors, executive director of Equality California, the statewide gay lobbying and political action group, adding, "At the recall rallies you've seen lots of signs saying RECALL GAY DAVIS." Davis may be a poster boy for campaign-finance corruption, but he has appointed a raft of out gays to office and just signed a major progay domestic-partners law passed by the legislature.

In many parts of the country, the antigay backlash was fed too by federal court orders to remove the two-and-a-half-ton replica of the Ten Commandments—known as "Roy's Rock"—from the Alabama Supreme Court. This religious brouhaha is mixed up in the minds of the simple as of a piece with the US Supreme Court's "sodomy" law decision in an assault on "family values." A Gallup poll found that 77 percent of Americans opposed the federal order to remove the monolith. Roy's Rock "has been a big story throughout the nation," says veteran Democratic political consultant Hank Sheinkopf. "I've worked in the Deep South for twenty-five years, and the Washington types don't understand just what an enormous impact all of this together will have. And not just on Christians—it's a reflection of the states' rights mentality that plays on distrust of the federal government. Race is no longer the dividing line in this country—it's religion and region."

Furthermore, the tens of millions of dollars being raised by the Democrats and labor to register and energize frequently religious black, Hispanic and working-class voters will bring to the polls many who could be swayed by combined antigay and religious appeals (which is why Bush has poured political patronage labeled "faith-based initiatives" into conservative black and Hispanic churches). All the national polls show that the lower down voters are on the education and income scales, the more antigay they are; thus, blacks oppose gay marriage by a whopping 65 to 28 percent, while among Hispanics it's 54 to 40 percent, according to an August *New York Times* poll. Former Martin Luther King Jr. aide Rev. Walter Fauntroy is one of the leaders of the antigay Alliance for Marriage, which backs the FMA, and the group's board is stacked with bishops and pastors from the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

The rabid right and its allies in the White House are aware of all of the above—which is why we can expect a relaunch of the antigay culture wars in 2004. ■

LETTERS
CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)
people ["The Way Life Should Be," Sept. 1/8]. Up here in the western mountains, Maine is a land of clear lakes, inviting mountains, thick evergreen forests and great people, "the way life should be." Also, you'd think that a *Nation* article would remind readers that Maine is leading the way in prescription drugs, universal health insurance and public campaign financing.
MICHAEL B. KATZ

Brooklin, Maine
■ Maine's proverbial pond has more than one rotting raccoon afloat. Janwillem van de Wetering's "way life should be" skated around one essential point of life on the coast of Maine: We are living on some of the most prime real estate in the country. The baby boom generation—the biggest, richest and, come to think of it, most destructive generation ever—has set its mind and collective buying power to escape the crowded Eastern Seaboard it helped ruin, to go north to an Eden wild enough, but not too wild, so that the *New York Times* is still available at the corner store.

The result: Local real estate value is being driven by robust "from away" economies, leaving Mainers with Connecticut-sized tax bills and little choice but to move out.
RICH BOULET

San Dimas, Calif.
■ I enjoyed the paean to Maine, and am responding to the roadside sign mentioned, "Be Alert, Think of Bert." The author says, "Bert who? Who cares Bert who?" I wonder if Bert doesn't refer to Marshall Dodge, a fellow student at Yale in the mid-1950s, the teller of those wonderful *Bert and I* stories. As I recall, he was killed in the early 1980s while on his bike.

I can still hear him beginning, "Beht and I ran a little lobstah fishin' bizness down east ah Kennebunkpaht..."
DON CHATFIELD

Rochester, Mass.
■ Janwillem van de Wetering's wry evocation of the state of Maine (double meaning intended) was delightful, but he states that the finback whale is "the largest creatures ever to live on this planet." The finback must take second place to the blue whale. The largest blue reported was some 113 feet long, with an estimated weight of 400,000 pounds. That's longer than a Boeing 737 and nearly three times its takeoff weight. Its tongue is about the size of a Volkswagen bug.

The blue has been mercilessly hunted for nearly a century, and its numbers have dwindled from about a quarter-million to perhaps 10,000, which is why I feel obliged to speak in its defense.
R.M. RIEFSTAHL

MEANWHILE, BACK IN NEW JERSEY

Nutley, NJ
■ One criterion I use to judge the livability of a state is whether George W. Bush contested it in 2000. I am happy to report that he did not set foot in New Jersey once, ran not a single TV ad and that his loss was in double digits. That says something positive about the hearts and minds of the people of New Jersey ["Letters," Aug. 18/25], a state that combines the highest per capita personal income with the politics of compassion and fairness.
ROBERT HALL

WELCOME, YOUNG ONES!

Columbia, Md.
■ My spirits were lifted by the letters from your young readers [" 'Slugs'? I Don't *Think* So!" Oct. 6]. What a pleasant surprise that it is not just us old ones who are active! We need new blood in the Democratic Party.
RITA LOMBARD

CORRECTIONS: BISHOPS TO BULLETS

■ In JoAnn Wypijewski's "Liberal Pieties" [Sept. 22], the Fisher family of *Six Feet Under* is Episcopalian, not Catholic.

In Christian Parenti's "Stretched Thin, Lied to & Mistreated" [Oct. 6], Bradley fighting vehicles use 25-millimeter shells, not 250.

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COMMENT

(Continued From Page 8)

high as kids in the suburban middle class, it's because teachers and other services can only do so much. Of course, Head Start's critics fail to acknowledge that these kids face problems created, in part, by conservative policies that make life harder for the poor. It's one thing to talk about reaching out to homeless children, as House conservatives do in their Head Start bill; it's something else to support policies that would enable the kids' parents to set up a home.

Indeed, Bush conservatives claim that most states already offer plenty of social services for the poor—and that Head Start is only duplicating them. A Head Start bill supported by the White House would essentially do away with comprehensive services by eliminating the federal role in administering the program. Through a block grant, it would give eight states control of running early childhood programs. (Other states would appear to have to meet a list of tough requirements to get the same privilege—except that another provision in the bill says that if the Secretary of Health and Human Services doesn't get to a state's application quickly enough, the state is automatically approved.) Moreover, the language about what range of services the states need to provide is vague.

The President insists that we must have faith in the states. "States understand that high quality and accountability are just as important in the preschool years as they are in grades K through 12," he says. But that's the problem. States tend to whittle away at even K-12 budgets when the going gets tough. Not a good sign for the 3-year-old who needs a Head Start staffer to, for example, help her parents past a language barrier so the dentist knows how long her tooth has been hurting.

What's left after Head Start's comprehensive services fall away? School readiness. Bush thinks that's enough. He told a crowd at a Maryland Head Start center, "I laid out a plan. Every Head Start center must prepare children to succeed by teaching the basics of learning and literacy. That's the cornerstone of the plan." Other aspects of the plan suffer from the same sort of workmanship: grand talk, followed by unfunded mandates (required bachelor's degrees for teachers, for example, and testing of kids not long out of diapers) and, ultimately, reduced services. The real issue here is that despite all the talk about accountability, Bush conservatives don't want the federal government to be accountable for anything, especially anything related to poverty.

The truth is, there's nothing much wrong with Head Start except that it reaches only 60 percent of kids eligible for it. Like all programs, it probably could use some tinkering to be more effective. But dismantling it is not the answer. Representative Alcee Hastings said of the assault on the program, "This is shameful and, frankly, sinister.... First the child tax credit, now this. What is next? Maybe there is a Republican bill out there that outlaws kickball or stickball." Nah. Compassionate conservatism would just talk the games up and then have the states tell the poorest kids, "Sorry, you can't play." JENNIFER NIESSLEIN

Jennifer Niesslein is co-editor of Brain, Child: The Magazine for Thinking Mothers *(brainchildmag.com).*

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

London Kills Me

DIANA ABU-JABER

BRICK LANE.
By Monica Ali.
Simon & Schuster. 369 pp. $25.

Monica Ali was recently named one of *Granta*'s Best of Young British Novelists—an A-list of red-hot literary youth writing some of the most promising books on the contemporary scene. This was particularly interesting at the time because Ali's first novel had not actually been published yet. She was selected on the strength of the manuscript for *Brick Lane*; it remained to be seen if her reviewers and readers would agree with the fanfare.

Happily, *Brick Lane* fulfills that early promise and establishes Ali as a writer of real literary depth and dimension. There is an elegance and a steadfast, patient, careful construction of observed detail to this prose, a meticulous layering of character and social observation that endows *Brick Lane* with a sophistication and maturity that might surprise readers who've come to expect flash and dash in modern fiction.

Ali mines much of the same territory as other young writers like Zadie Smith and Jhumpa Lahiri, whose work highlights cultural fusions, leaps between traditionalism and modernity. Their writing features sharp-eyed immigrants and their children, who make their way through alien Western landscapes, assailed by the independence and isolation of individualism, and who respond by concocting their own amalgams of lives lived in between worlds. But there's also a certain solemn dignity to Ali's prose that distinguishes her from many other modern writers, a stateliness more reminiscent of Thomas Hardy's gradual accumulation of detail than Smith's flurries of wit and allusion.

Brick Lane orbits around the experiences of Nazneen, a girl from the Muslim country of Bangladesh. At her birth, the ancient midwife pronounces her stillborn, and she is very nearly left for dead. Her sudden return to life marks her as a survivor. Her mother, who is "famous for crying," instructs Nazneen that it is a woman's role to accept her suffering with indifference: "What could not be changed must be borne. And since nothing could be changed, everything had to be borne. This principle ruled her life." While Nazneen accepts this legacy of passive stoicism, however, she still has within her an inviolable sense of determination and resolve that will take years to come to full fruition.

After her younger sister Hasina runs away with her lover, Nazneen's angry father marries her to Chanu, a childish and pretentious older man. Chanu promptly brings Nazneen to England and treats her like an indentured servant. In England, away from her family and friends, Nazneen must face up to the immigrant's long struggle to endure, to adapt, to re-create herself and to forge a new life. She becomes a great observer, taking in the daily comings and goings of her neighborhood. A tattooed lady sits in her window across the way, as passive as Nazneen, her strangeness manifest in her skin, in her unorthodox choices. In certain ways she is a physical totem for Nazneen's own internalized mark of difference.

Monica Ali has been compared to Zadie Smith and Jhumpa Lahiri, but her stately prose is more reminiscent of Thomas Hardy.

Nazneen's life is defined by her female Bangladeshi neighbors—her close friend, the jokey Razia, and the snooping Mrs. Islam. Their lives and their perceptions of the world are spun through deep channels of gossip and rumor. When Nazneen tries to resist the tyranny of this gossip-mongering, Mrs. Islam corrects her sharply, pointing out that the gossip, intrusions and general "nosiness" of their cultural community provide a real sort of security and unity and actually are symptoms of social differences between the East and the West:

Diana Abu-Jaber is the author, most recently, of Crescent: A Novel *(Norton).*

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IN OUR ORBIT

The Believers

A HUNDRED LITTLE HITLERS: The Death of a Black Man, the Trial of a White Racist, and the Rise of the Neo-Nazi Movement in America.
By Elinor Langer.
Metropolitan. 398 pp. $26.

In 1990, *The Nation* ran a dispatch from Portland, Oregon, by editorial board member Elinor Langer titled "The American Neo-Nazi Movement Today." The piece, which took up almost an entire issue of the magazine, was provoked by an event that had taken place two years earlier: Three skinheads in Portland had beaten an Ethiopian man to death with a baseball bat during a street brawl. Langer had originally planned to write about their trials for the magazine. But when the defendants pleaded guilty, she switched tack and embarked on an ambitious effort to examine a burgeoning faction bent on igniting a race war. She took an incident that rocked a community and turned her comprehensive report into a sociological study, one of the first of its kind on the subject.

Thirteen years later, Langer has expanded on her research and published *A Hundred Little Hitlers*. Unlike her original article, which focused on the murder to draw out the history and sociology of the skinhead movement, Langer's narrative here is centered on the civil trial that aimed to hold a California-based white power group—the White Aryan Resistance (WAR)—and its leader responsible for the death of the Portland man. The suit was brought by the controversial Southern Poverty Law Center, famously led by Morris Dees—a man whose effective fundraising tactics increased annual contributions to the SPLC from $2.5 million to $11.4 million between 1982 and 1992. Tom Metzger—WAR's infamous leader—was the defendant, along with his son, WAR itself and two of the skinheads who had pleaded guilty to the killing (Dees excluded one skinhead from the lawsuit, hoping to win his cooperation). Although Metzger is undeniably an ambitious racist—he ran a talk show, recorded regular racist bulletins on an answering machine known as the "Aryan Update," worked with David Duke, ran for the Senate, participated in most of the major outgrowths and offshoots of the skinhead movement and was considered by many to be a leader of the next generation—Langer puzzles over why he was tried for the crime, and a considerable portion of the book is a complicated and not always critical portrait of the man.

In her *Nation* piece, Langer predicted of Metzger: "As long as he is alive and talking, he is likely to have a forum. He will not be easy to stop." And she was right: Although Metzger lost the trial and, with it, most of his assets, in the end a Faustian bargain was struck to settle the messy matter of Metzger's continuing to profit financially from racism. Langer reveals for the first time that, as part of Metzger's punishment, all money sent to him for racist propaganda is, to this day, divided in a two-thirds, one-third split. (Unsurprisingly, neither Metzger nor the SPLC has ever been eager to highlight this tidbit of information.) Ten of every thirty dollars donated to WAR goes to the SPLC, while twenty still finds its way into Metzger's coffers. Still, it's not just this unseemly result that strikes Langer as a failure of the trial; she sees the SPLC's victory as one of "historical emptiness."

In the book's epilogue, Langer muses on the "ifs" of the episode, pausing to contemplate what could have come of the killing and its aftermath if the three skinheads who pleaded guilty to the murder "had gone to trial in the first place and the people of Portland had been forced to face the emergence of their youthful white supremacist movement with more candor and less panic." Langer's reasoned analysis prods readers to do just that, and in transcending the hype and showmanship that came to define her subjects, she reveals the shades of gray that permeate a cult that insists on seeing the world in black and white.

EMILY BIUSO

"The white people," she said, "they all do what they want. It's nobody's business.

"If a child is screaming because it is being beaten, they just close the door and the windows. They might make a complaint about noise. But the child is not their business, even if it is being beaten to death.

"They do what they want. It is a private matter. Everything is a private matter. That is how the white people live."

Throughout this narrative runs a loud, angry reaction against the traditional woman's imperative to endure passively whatever suffering is handed to her, to "wait" and "weep," in the words of Nazneen's female relatives. Contrasted with Nazneen's immigrant struggles are the much sharper, more tangible hardships that her sister Hasina faces back in Dhaka. A physically beautiful girl who rejected the traditional type of marriage that Nazneen submitted to, Hasina seems determined to create her own fate.

Hasina's Western-style attempt at romantic freedom, however, runs up against the traditional strictures of Bangladeshi society. Her story comes in a series of heartbreaking letters, in which she reports her tragic turns of fate in an eternally stoic voice. And Ali's unsentimental, frequently comedic tone manages to keep this section from descending into melodrama. Both sisters are equally confined by their circumstances, by the traditions that silence women and constrict them within an oppressive system of honor and shame.

Certainly, in many ways this is a dark story, even a somber one, but the mood of the novel is redeemed by Nazneen's ability to observe and to question events and people around her. She is under few illusions about the sort of man she married, gradually realizing that Chanu is essentially a self-absorbed pedant, a very sorry variety of loser in any language. In England, he suffers a classic sort of immigrant comedown, a shattering of great expectations, as he is incapable of the sort of stony-eyed pragmatism that his wife is trained in.

But Nazneen is living a different sort of story than her mother and aunts did. When she herself gives birth to daughters, there is the sense that now things will be different. While one of her daughters is meek and pliable, her older daughter, Shahana, is impressively fierce and independent-minded, full of her own will. She embodies the classic Westernized rebellious youth and she engages in a potent tug-of-

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war with her overbearing father. Chanu invents minute, torturous power games to assert his pre-eminence and subjugate his family—insisting that his daughters act as "page turners," when he opens a book to read (they are required to intuit when the page must be turned). He lectures them pompously about the past grandeurs of Bangladesh, India and Muslims, but Shahana resists the dictates of the past, moving into her own as a daughter of both East and West.

Despite the deep currents of tragedy and sadness in the novel, there are lovely, articulate bursts of description and surprising scenes of magical insight as Nazneen transforms and develops. There are no easy or automatic breakthroughs; rather, the novel follows the subtle intricacies of emotional free play, the internal currency of what it is to be a human in any part of the world. The moments of revelation are quiet, yet no less stirring for that, as in a brief, lighthearted scene in which Nazneen tries on a pair of pants for the first time or in a delicate, exquisite description of a baby's charm:

> The baby was astonishing. He had little cloth ears, floppy as cats. The warmth of his round stomach could heat the world. His head smelled like a sacred flower. And his fists held mysterious, tiny balls of fluff from which he could not bear to be parted.

Oddly enough, it is just when Nazneen embarks on her truest and deepest personal rebellion that a lull arises in the narrative. The story becomes more discursive, abstract and less intimate, as Nazneen becomes entangled with a new man and his Islamic organization, the Bengal Tigers, a group that is trying to define itself both religiously and culturally, struggling to respond to local anti-Muslim sentiment as well as to world events like the attacks of September 11.

This is sensitive and important material, and Ali's book makes some refreshing statements about the nature of racism, bigotry and contemporary religious chauvinism. But while the insertions of political and topical social critique are for the most part deftly handled, at times the narrative can seem agenda-heavy, larded with a few too many pronouncements and overly explicit speeches, information that feels only partially interwoven with the fabric of the story. A character's statement, "And the government—it's more scared of Islam than heroin," strikes one as both thought-provoking and yet too heavy-handed for the fluidity of this story. Smaller, personal description gets diffuse; the characters' ages and the passage of time seem neglected and elusive. Big Issues are drawn into the story in a way that threatens to overshadow the delicate interplay of characters and their private realities.

In the end, Nazneen's story is brought to a dramatic crisis point, in which she must finally stop looking to her friends and family for direction and make her own way. And, while it's a bit neat, the conclusion is also invigorating and affirming, a strong, final flourish that puts Nazneen in her proper place—as a woman making her way in the world, at the center of her own world.

Of course, I can't help asking myself: What is wrong with having a so-called agenda? Isn't there something impressive and mind-opening when an artistic work is able to convey real information about the actual world? As with many fine writers, Ali's writing is marked with the urgency of an author speaking in critical times, a novelist who has something that she absolutely must tell us, that we absolutely need to hear. Her story is deepened and intensified by this urgency; the characters are marked by it. In this respect, it is very much a novel for our times, a voice emerging directly

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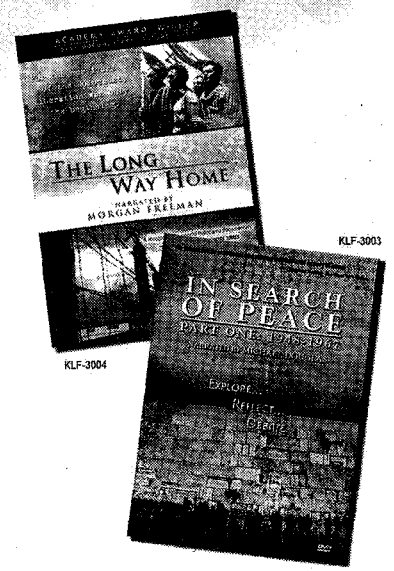

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out of contemporary world experience.

That is not to distract from the considerable imagination and creativity of *Brick Lane*, but only to say that the two—information and artistry—don't have to be mutually exclusive or incompatible. You may notice that some of these characters are angry or agitated about things that are happening right now in the world around us. Ali isn't being terribly self-conscious, ironic or deeply self-referential about this material, and I have the feeling that ultimately this is because these issues really matter to this writer.

Brick Lane is a serious work in the best sense of the term. It has weight, purpose and passion. Exciting and timely, this novel gives us a slice of the world, contained within the sinuous contours of the particular, and in so doing, helps us find quietly private insights into noisy public affairs. ■

Justice Talking

SCOTT L. MALCOMSON

TAKING LIBERTIES: Four Decades in the Struggle for Rights.
By Aryeh Neier. PublicAffairs. 406 pp. $30.

In his memoir, *Taking Liberties*, Aryeh Neier emerges, almost despite himself, as a fascinating man. The story of his achievements is itself interesting and takes up the bulk of his pages. And I do mean the bulk. It is to the introduction that Neier relegates his childhood (born Berlin 1937) as a refugee in England (for a time he was confined to a hostel, "where, I am told, I stopped speaking"). We have a page on the Midlands towns where he grew up and what it was like to be a Jew there (odd at matins, otherwise not bad), then across the seas to Stuyvesant High in New York City, where he "opposed McCarthyism to the limited extent possible for a high-school student." Neier devoured the works of the midcentury antifascist and (mostly) anti-Communist writers, Orwell-Camus-Koestler-Silone, and hurried on to Cornell. There he agitated for free speech and cottoned to Norman Thomas. Naturally he was drawn to the League for Industrial Democracy (LID). In what would become a pattern, he rocketed from newcomer to director (age 21).

This new job accounts for his never attending law school. Neier is appealingly modest on this score: Considering the profound effects he would have on American and international law, he has bragging rights for having succeeded without a law degree, but he chooses not to exercise them. This lack of professionalist hauteur (or of insecurity) is remarkable in the field of human rights, which is full of people who are not really lawyers (though many have the degree) trying to convince themselves and others that they're not really politicians. Neier very cleverly and exactly splits all these differences. He argues the law and he fights like a politician, as seen in his able demolition of Ernest Lefever as Reagan's nominee to be assistant secretary of state for human rights.

Neier's opposition to Lefever and much else in the Reagan Administration was not ideological in any standard sense of the term. What he thinks of as human rights are really the basic civil and political rights of American law. Much of his advocacy, in the American context, consisted in expanding the reach of these rights into, for example, reproductive freedom, fair treatment in jails, free speech even when it is hateful and respect from the state even when you are mentally ill. Neier's advocacy was not about elaborating the theory or expanding the number of rights. This remained true when he moved onto the international stage in the 1970s. What he took abroad was American rights, and to a considerable extent he, like many others, sees American power as the leading defender of those rights—if not always in reality, then in principle.

His perspective seems to have been consistent since his student years on the center-left. As director of the LID, Neier thought to invigorate its student branch, which he renamed Students for a Democratic Society in 1959. He writes that he hired, then fired, Tom Hayden: "It was too late. He had established his leadership of SDS." At this

Scott L. Malcomson is the author, most recently, of One Drop of Blood: The American Misadventure of Race *(Farrar, Straus & Giroux), and is an adviser to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.*

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point, Neier expresses his basic ideology: "I was anti-Soviet and anti-Communist and was appalled by arguments that Soviet repression and the invasion of Hungary were defensive actions.... Also, the language about 'participatory democracy' sounded to me like a justification for demagogy." Neier says he regretted losing SDS (then soon leaving LID) because the "political views I wanted to promote...were essentially those I have maintained ever since."

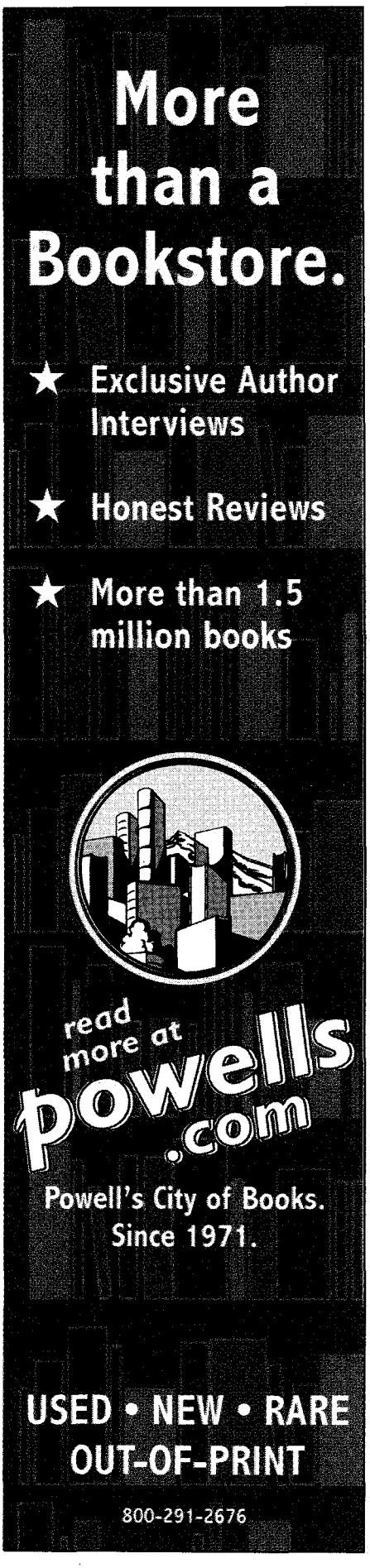
This is all still in the introduction. Neier goes on to summarize his rise to stewardship of the American Civil Liberties Union, then his early involvement in Helsinki Watch and Americas Watch followed by his combining of them and other Watches into Human Rights Watch. From there he went on to George Soros's Open Society Institute, where he remains today. Throughout, Neier's political emphases are reliably liberal. (Anti-Communism was key to the post-Vietnam growth of human rights culture, a point too easy to forget today.) His political work has been law-based in both the obvious way and in the sense that laws, unlike politics, can be built into a sociopolitical edifice that has some chance of lasting. Of course, legal rights can be reinterpreted—the legal defenses of segregation, for example, were often rights-based—and treaties can be "unsigned." Solemn legal commitments can die of neglect. The reasons are almost always external to the law; law is no substitute for politics. This is something Neier never forgets.

Neier's other major political choice, early on, concerned the relationship between law, economics and government. "I acquired a reputation in other quarters as a conservative, or even as a reactionary, because I strenuously opposed efforts to get the ACLU and Human Rights Watch to deal with economic issues as rights." This is an ancient debate. The stories of property and liberty cannot really be told separately. The trick is to make them complementary. Neier fears that a focus on economic rights would tend to diminish political and civil rights—indeed, "authoritarian power is probably a prerequisite for giving meaning to economic and social rights." It is an extraordinary and incautious statement. All democratic countries have laws guaranteeing security of property, for example, and often in the language of rights. All democratic countries have laws limiting the exercise of dominion by one individual or group over another, and they are also often in the language of rights, as in the right to a safe workplace. Few if any of these democracies can today be described as slipping fast down the slope into state Communism or any other form of totalitarianism. In fact, Neier himself believes that democratic government and political rights give purpose and direction to economic development, which amounts to an acknowledgment that rights have some role in the economic sphere.

The subject is clearly a joyless one for Neier, which is perhaps why he rather artlessly bats it away and returns to his home ground of civil and political rights. It's a shame, because the subject is a critically important one and will not go away until the means are found to eliminate gross poverty. However, one should also accept that Neier's dance card has been pretty full. In one chapter he's defending draft resisters, in another agitating for the mentally ill. He's defending the Klan's right to free speech, then building the truth-and-reconciliation process in South Africa. Neier takes us with him through all these fights while maintaining a remarkable serenity.

I liked this "by his works shall you know him" approach. Basically, all Americans and many non-Americans should shake Aryeh Neier's hand and say, Thank you. He has made us freer. He didn't have to do that.

This does raise the question of motivation. Fielding wrote of his hero Mr. Jonathan Wild that, "as he was embellished with many of the greatest and noblest Endowments, so these could not well be said to be absolutely pure and without Alloy." Neier's story is alloyed here and there with a certain immodesty; he overshadows his comrades. This may, however, be an occupational trait of human rights innovators. William Schulz, executive director of Amnesty International USA, says very little about Human Rights Watch or Neier in his excellent book from 2001, *In Our Own Best Interest: How Defending Human Rights Benefits Us All*—and Neier has little to say about Amnesty International. Jeri Laber, in her charming and often moving memoir, *The Courage of Strangers: Coming of Age With the Human Rights Movement*, is visibly unhappy with the topic of Aryeh Neier and spends little time on it, a favor Neier more than returns in *Taking Liberties*. (His assessment of her "anecdotal efforts" is a compact classic of faint praise.) The key point here is that they worked together for years, bringing along from infancy the Watches that became Human Rights Watch. One imagines some tense moments at parties among the New York human rights community. And what do they all make of someone like Paul Gordon Lauren, whose fascinating and lengthy history *The Evolution of International Human Rights: Visions Seen* (1998) positions all



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NGOs as rather peripheral to the more important (to him) story of United Nations rights institutions? Lauren mentions Human Rights Watch exactly once, sandwiched in a list between Human Rights Internet and the International League for the Rights and Liberation of Peoples.

Well, as flaws enrich the good person's character, so failures give texture to the pattern of achievement. Neier's prose reaches its highs when he is talking about battles he lost. The first such moment comes in his chapter on visiting Cuba in 1988. The previous year, Gen. Vernon Walters, the US ambassador to the UN, had charged that Cuba held 15,000 or more political prisoners under the worst of conditions. Neier was to take part in a visit that the Cubans hoped would disprove Walters's contentions. Neier, of course, was in no way interested in helping Castro's government, but he did want to see the prisons. He went, and showed that Walters's number was far too high.

That's the narrative for this chapter, a slim one compared with those of other chapters, which usually recount the story of a battlefield innovation like making reproductive rights part of the ACLU program. But the point of the Cuba chapter is not to illuminate another Neier victory. The point is this:

> There was no natural light. The toilet was a hole in the ground. A spigot over this provided cold water to flush, to bathe in, and to drink. The meals consisted of a sparse breakfast and one other meal a day. Prisoners told me they had been confined naked in such cells.... But some prisoners were held for years in only slightly less harsh circumstances in a ninety-nine-cell punishment building at Combinado del Este. This building was known by the prisoners as "Rectangulo de Muerte" (rectangle of death), or as the "pizzeria," for the oven-like conditions in hot weather. One prisoner I talked to there had been locked up in such conditions for six years.

Reading this uncharacteristically desperate passage I recalled the refugee boy who "stopped speaking." Neier writes, "Though the Cuban prisons were once the subject of much attention in discussions of human rights internationally, they have faded from view in the past decade." I think he must have hated it that he couldn't get the prisoners out, nor could he prevent them from being forgotten. (Such sad anxiety at the operations of forgetting also comes across in his chapter on Central America in the Reagan years, which begins by noting that El Salvador "has since relapsed into obscurity.")

A more ideological failure is represented for Neier by China. Who lost China? Neier names those who believed that trade and foreign investment would bring democracy and civil rights. Here again, as was the case with his opposing of economic rights, Neier does not want anything to interfere with the priority given to civil and political rights. Indeed, the only economics that sustains his interest is economic sanctions; he is very interesting on their successful use against Communist Poland, and so committed to such policies that he brings himself to praise Ronald Reagan, who directed the effort against Warsaw.

You come away from the China chapter with the strong impression that Neier would like to fight another round. His failures are interesting to read about perhaps because they interest him more than his successes. In his way he loves the fight. (He is obviously frustrated that his current job prevents him from taking larger bites out of John Ashcroft.) It's this spirit, and the frank, open empathy he shows for suffering, that makes Neier come through these pages as fascinating rather than simply admirable, and passionate as well as good. ■

Our Victorian Ancestors

MICHAEL KAZIN

A FIERCE DISCONTENT: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870–1920. By Michael McGerr. Free Press. 395 pp. $30.

"You are the heirs of one of the country's great traditions, the Progressive movement that started late in the nineteenth century and remade the American experience piece by piece," Bill Moyers told a throng of liberal Democrats who recently gathered in a Washington hotel to plan the defeat of George W. Bush. What made Progressivism so great, according to Moyers, was its nonviolent war on the Gilded Age plutocracy, which, aided by such clever rogues as Mark Hanna, had "strangled" the promise of social equality "in the hard grip of a merciless ruling class."

It's an eminently usable past. If Karl Rove styles himself a twenty-first-century Hanna, fashioning a new era of Republican dominance, then why can't the postmodern left be the second coming of Robert La Follette and Jane Addams—those inspiring figures, in and out of office, who challenged the politics of laissez-faire cupidity and began to make the United States a fairer, more humane society?

Only a hopeless pedant would dismiss the value of history as a motivating force for the living. But contemporary "progressives" would be wise to look more closely at the white middle-class crusaders who coined the name before they rush to emulate their achievements. Michael McGerr's consistently intelligent, superbly crafted survey, *A Fierce Discontent*, is a fine place to start.

The Progressives, McGerr explains, had ambitions that stretched far beyond mere crackdowns on trust-builders and graft-takers. With income and inheritance taxes and a ban on child labor, they sought to narrow the class divide that yawned between the factory tenement and the mansion on the hill. They yearned to purify the body politic through an aggressive politics of the body—which meant banning prostitution, limiting divorce and abolishing the "liquor traffic." And behind each specific reform lay a grand desire to replace the self-serving individualism of American culture with an ethic of service and responsibility. Although the insurgency included Catholics and Jews, it always had the flavor of a Protestant crusade. Most reformers abandoned the evangelical faith of their childhood, but their messianic zeal for perfecting society could not have been any stronger if they'd founded a new church and written their own Bible.

This portrait might unsettle some of the liberals who cheered Moyers's address, delivered at a conference that vowed to "Take Back America." Janus could have been the Progressives' patron saint. In their stern regulation of big business and attempts to redistribute wealth, they were the forerunners of New Deal liberals. But on cultural matters, most were militant Victorians,

Michael Kazin is at work on a biography of William Jennings Bryan. A second edition of his book America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s *(written with Maurice Isserman) has just been published by Oxford.*

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aspiring to reshape the nation into a well-ordered, hard-working, self-disciplined community. In one of his many White House exhortations, Theodore Roosevelt urged the "steady training of the individual citizen, in conscience and character, until he grows to abhor corruption and greed and tyranny and brutality and to prize justice and fair dealing."

Lofty visions of self-improvement always look better in speeches than when chiseled into law. For certain white reformers (most, but not all of them, from Dixie), "taking back America" meant building the elaborate machinery of Jim Crow. McGerr realizes, of course, that segregation deprived African-American citizens of their hard-won constitutional rights. But many of its architects, he points out, sincerely believed they were protecting black people from the routine sadism visited on them by the insecure white majority. "Ours is a world of inexorable divisions," wrote a leading Southern Progressive. "Good fences make good neighbors." The most powerful black man in America agreed, at least in public. Secretly, Booker T. Washington was funding boycotts of Jim Crow streetcars in several Southern cities.

Progressivism has always been a difficult beast for historians to tie down. How can a narrative lucidly round up all the different species of reformers—from Marxian preachers to polite racists to upper-class suffragists to moralizing scolds to a hyperactive President who won a Nobel Peace Prize yet was in love with war? Richard Hofstadter and Robert Wiebe set the standard several decades ago with interpretations (*The Age of Reform*, published in 1955, and *The Search for Order*, in 1967) drenched in the irony of unintended consequences. They described how a generation of sanguine altruists was blind to the clever antics of well-heeled conservatives—witness the hijacking of the recall and initiative in California—and the resistance of ordinary folk to being perfected—cf. the failure of Prohibition.

McGerr is not averse to irony, but his book dwells more on the social history that activists confronted than on the foibles of overreaching. For example, he shows how the attempt to "transform Americans" looked to a poor Jewish immigrant named Rahel Golub. Golub gladly accepted medical aid from settlement-house workers but was puzzled by a visiting college girl who pestered her with "eager questions"—and she recoiled at missionaries who tried to convert her to Christianity. Drawing on a small library of good histories published since the 1960s, McGerr takes full measure of how women shaped the course of social change—as reformers, intellectuals, wage-earners and seekers after a myriad of pleasures, both new and old.

Unlike his scholarly forebears, McGerr offers no big idea to make sense of the era. Hofstadter argued that most reformers were anxious about their declining status in an order run by new-rich industrialists, while Wiebe focused on the rise of do-gooder bureaucrats who sought to bring social harmony out of chaos. But McGerr paints on a larger canvas than they did, and his ambitious meld of character, policy and context should make his book a landmark in the field. *A Fierce Discontent* may even do something to reawaken public interest in the turn-of-the-century crusaders themselves, who have often seemed a rather grim and confusing lot.

McGerr also has a perceptive response to the tricky question of why, by the 1920s, the Progressive flame had flickered so low. The key, he contends, was the rise of a new definition of individual freedom. In the nineteenth century, freedom meant the liberty of people and property from an authoritarian state. Now it meant the ability to enjoy the fruits of mass culture. Increasing numbers of Americans were stepping out to dance halls, vaudeville theaters, baseball games, department stores, picture shows and a celebrated art exhibition that featured Marcel Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase*, which one puzzled viewer likened to "a lot of disused golf clubs and bags." Meanwhile, autos, airplanes and telephones were altering received notions of time and space.

The young men and women, from all classes and races, who reveled in these commodities and adventures grew unwilling to let work, however virtuous its purpose, rule their imagination as well as their days. McGerr doesn't adequately explain why this epochal change, which began to occur in the late nineteenth century, didn't rob reform of its energy long before the doughboys sailed home in triumph from the battlefields of France. But he does give a rich account of how the dream of personal liberation "unsettled the nascent order of progressive America" and sapped movements for collective uplift. Not for the first or last time did the pursuit of individual happiness trump yearnings of a more earnest, selfless kind.

If there's a flaw in McGerr's thoughtful study, it's his virtual silence about party politics—the point of departure for Moyers's rousing speech. Individual re-

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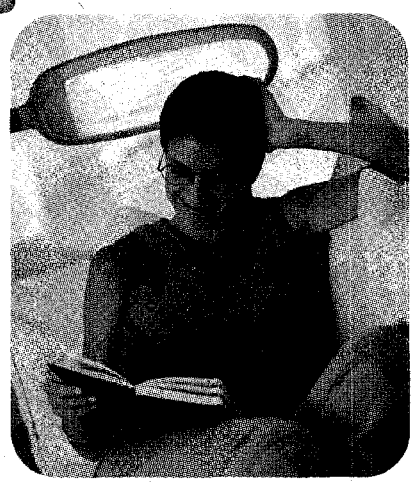

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formers and movements could thrust an issue like child labor or corporate bribery into the headlines. But only when Democrats and/or Republicans embraced it for their own purposes could a lasting change occur. Despite the lofty reputation Teddy Roosevelt has gained (thanks, in part, to John McCain and Edmund Morris), it was the Democrats who most consistently fought for class-based reform during the Progressive years. They were particularly active in restraining corporate power and passing laws to aid wage-earners and small farmers—while excluding most black people from taking part in politics at all. The fact that William Jennings Bryan led his party's populist charge from the Cross of Gold speech in 1896 up to the eve of World War I suggests how deep were the evangelical roots of the fierce discontent.

But no faction of Progressives was able to meet the challenge of what McGerr calls "the promise of liberation." Nor, it should be added, have their would-be emulators done so today. Citizens who value self-expression above all else make poor recruits for social movements. The post-1960s left has certainly helped to free millions of Americans from the pressure to conform to the straight white ideal. But a respect for diversity is only one element of a good society. Contemporary progressives have yet to figure out how to speak as compellingly about material decency for all Americans as they do about freedom of the self. When they do, the heirs of Mark Hanna will begin to fear for their future. ■

TELEVISION

Rhapsody in Blue

K. LEANDER WILLIAMS

MARTIN SCORSESE PRESENTS THE BLUES: A MUSICAL JOURNEY

Time sure flies. This past February, when the 107th Congress declared 2003 the official "Year of the Blues," it was nearly impossible to take in the news without a titter of amusement. The war drums were beating louder. The economy was screeching to a halt. Was Congress merely kidding or had the resolution's sponsors, among them Bill Frist, decided that the time had finally come to drop the flatteringly lit facade and tell the country what most already knew, that things kinda suck? Here we all were just a year and a half after September 11, the day that was supposed to announce the end of irony as we knew it, and yet there was ol' irony sitting on top of the world and grinning like a satisfied hoochie-coochie man, getting the Congressional seal of approval while joined to a style of music noted for telling it like it is. Such providence could justifiably bring tears to a blues fan's eyes—if, that is, crying (and its cousins moaning and hollering) were not already high on the list of activities most blues people do regularly anyway.

Of course, it's pretty safe to say that irony was not Congress's intent, however amusing the sentiment. On behalf of the Seattle-based Experience Music Project rock museum and the Memphis-based Blues Foundation, the Year of the Blues resolution was meant to usher in the centenary celebration of what has become one of the most far-reaching musical idioms to come of age in the twentieth century, the root element of just about every form of Western popular music from jazz and country to rock and hip-hop. As an act of institutional charity buoyed by a host of synergistic offerings, including a PBS television series executive-produced by noted filmmaker and blues fan Martin Scorsese, Congress's boosterism addresses the fact that the imposing shadow the blues casts over world culture has done little to keep the public interested in the music in its original form.

Does it matter, however, that there's even an irony in pronouncing the blues 100 years old?—1903 is certainly not the first year they bubbled up from the Mississippi Delta, woven together from the strands of work songs, spirituals and other folk forms prevalent among the black poor during Reconstruction. It turns out to be the year, however, in which William Christopher

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"W.C." Handy, a classical-leaning African-American musician from Memphis who'd get rich eleven years later off of the publication of the composition "St. Louis Blues," claimed he first overheard an itinerant slide guitarist at a Mississippi railway station. Nearly forty years later, in 1941, Handy would name his autobiography *Father of the Blues*, overstating his case, on the one hand, because documentation (expressed in copyrights and royalty statements) was on his side and, on the other, because by that time there were few in the rarefied circles he ran in who could call him on it.

Perhaps the best thing one can say about the seven films in the PBS series *Martin Scorsese Presents the Blues: A Musical Journey* is that each one is populated by scores of individuals descended from the nameless guitarist Handy witnessed at that Tutwiler, Mississippi, train depot. They gave themselves titles like Howlin' Wolf, Muddy Waters, Lead Belly and Sister Rosetta Tharpe, names that seemed to spring from some mythic Southern hamlet that Zora Neale Hurston might have chronicled in a story or novel. Scorsese's knowledge of their histories is extensive, profound even: His catalytic use of music as more than a mere scene-setter in films like *Mean Streets* and *GoodFellas* is well-known, and in 1976 he captured some of the last concert footage of Waters during the show that became *The Last Waltz*, a stunning documentary about the folk-blues ensemble The Band's final concert.

As a boomer child of the period in the 1960s when college kids throughout America were getting hip to rock's debt to the music of aging black men and women ("the music behind our music," the director has written), Scorsese grasped instantly that the story of the blues is about three things: race; catharsis born of both good times and conflict; and migration (of blacks from Africa to the American South, and then on to points north, east and west). "It's tragic that racism continues to thrive in the western world," Scorsese writes in the preface to the handsome companion volume to the series, just published by the HarperCollins imprint Amistad. "It's also utterly ridiculous, because there's no one who hasn't profited from the spirit that animates this music." If the series is any indication, Scorsese brings this point home by making only one of the films himself—the Mississippi-Delta-to-West-Africa travelogue *Feel Like Going Home*—and handing the others to an astonishingly diverse array of popular directors: Charles Burnett, Clint Eastwood, Mike Fig-

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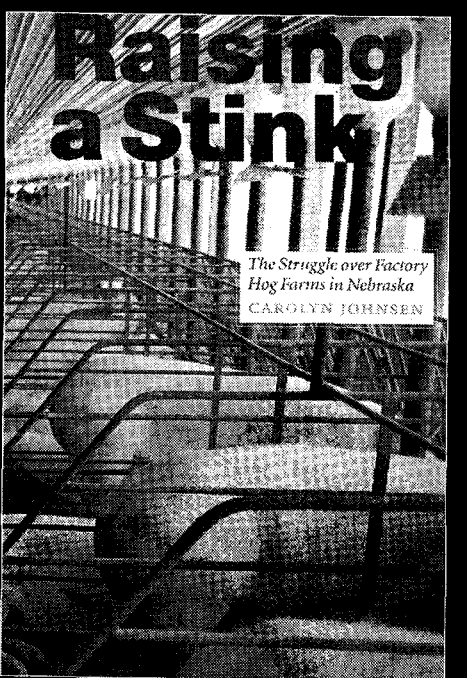

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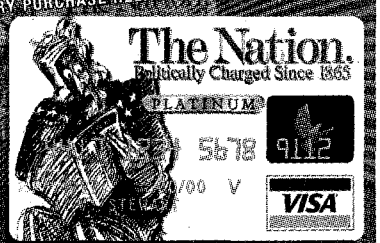

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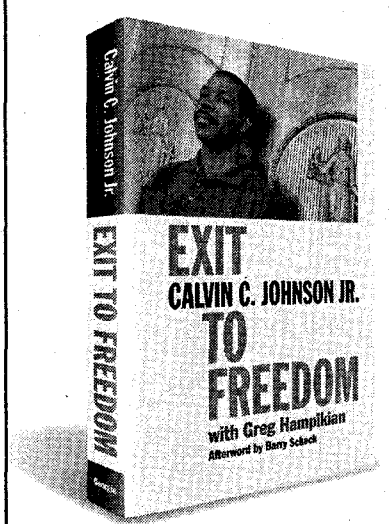

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gis, Marc Levin, Richard Pearce and Wim Wenders. (Eastwood's *Piano Blues* was not available for review at press time.)

Music documentaries that aren't necessarily concert films generally come into the world with a couple of strikes against them. First, they're only as good as the back story, the narrative that has to sustain the viewer's attention if the style of music is unfamiliar. As a genre peopled with characters who in some instances adhered to a strict outsider's code and were often exploited for their trouble by well-meaning record men—the only people outside their audiences, ironically, who understood what they were doing—the blues seems like a natural for exegesis.

But despite the montages of chain gangs that pepper a couple of films in the series (a reminder that artists like Lead Belly, Bukka White and Son House actually served time), that part of the history is largely missing from the series. Levin's film, *Godfathers and Sons*, probably commits the most egregious transgression. Ostensibly a history of Chicago blues, the film follows Marshall Chess, son of the legendary blues label Chess Records' cofounder Leonard, and lets him get away with some noxious comments about Chess artists' incessant money problems and taste in fine clothes and cars. A little while later he says something in an aside about the "chunk of money" he acquired when his father sold the company, seemingly oblivious to the fact that the two things are connected by, say, the twenty-plus years of financial inequities Muddy Waters endured at the label. Worst of all, Chess often does this with the blessing of his sidekick in the film, none other than Public Enemy's rap politico Chuck "Fight the Power" D. (Please, don't ask why.)

To their credit, Scorsese and series producer Alex Gibney were not interested in a string of films that stuck to a straitlaced chronology. But their desire for a throng of personal pictures that rambled like the earliest blues men and women has also resulted in a series that at times feels unwieldy. The same footage of House and Howlin' Wolf recurs in more than one film. (Waters also turns up again and again, but the clips vary and are often priceless.) Burnett's *Warming by the Devil's Fire*, potentially significant both because he was the lone African-American director commissioned and because his take invites uppity early blues women like Bessie Smith and Victoria Spivey to the pervading country-blues party, turns out not to be a documentary at all. It's a re-enacted slice of autobiography that sags slightly under its own weight. Wenders's *The Soul of a Man* also uses actors for the director's silent-film-like dramatizations of the lives of Blind Willie Johnson and Skip James, but then morphs into a somewhat kooky reminiscence of the late J.B. Lenoir that stars a Chicago-based European couple who befriended him shortly before his death—obviously as charmed by his custom-made zebra-print tuxedo as by his music. The whole is salvaged somewhat by the modern, live-in-the-studio renditions of classics performed by, among others, Beck, Lucinda Williams, Nick Cave, Marc Ribot and Cassandra Wilson.

Interesting enough, the two films that are the most fascinating to watch and listen to are not only the most straightforward but also happen to have the most to do with racial issues. Figgis's *Red, White and Blues* chronicles the history of the idiom in England, where the blues bug hit so hard that bands like the Rolling Stones (named after a Waters tune) and Cream were driven to reach back across the Atlantic and show stateside kids what they'd been neglecting for decades. None of the articulate talking heads in the film, though—not John Mayall, Mick Fleetwood, Eric Clapton, Georgie Fame or Tom Jones—actually answer he million-dollar question: "Why were you so moved by the music of rural and ghettoized African-Americans a whole world away?" And yet, with the exception of Van Morrison's flat-out dismissal of the whole subject ("the blues isn't black or white, it's the truth"), you get the sense that most can't answer because they're still actually looking for the answers themselves.

What makes Richard Pearce's *The Road to Memphis* the unadulterated gem of the bunch, however, is the way the director carefully peels back layers of legend and preservationist nostalgia in order to reveal the blues as it exists today. Pearce's film follows the brouhaha surrounding a particularly star-studded edition of the annual W.C. Handy Blues Awards; the evening functions as a homecoming of sorts for former Beale Street stalwarts B.B. King and Ike Turner. And yet, it's Pearce's decision to juxtapose the red-carpet travels of King the Blues Icon with the no-frills touring of raunchy, chitlin-circuit veteran Bobby Rush that provides the film's center. All at once, this allows the director to draw a vivid portrait of Memphis during its postwar years as a black mecca and give a glimpse of why leaving the South was ultimately an imperative for any blues act with bigger aspirations. Had these artists stayed put, there's no telling when their music would have reached the Senate floor. ■

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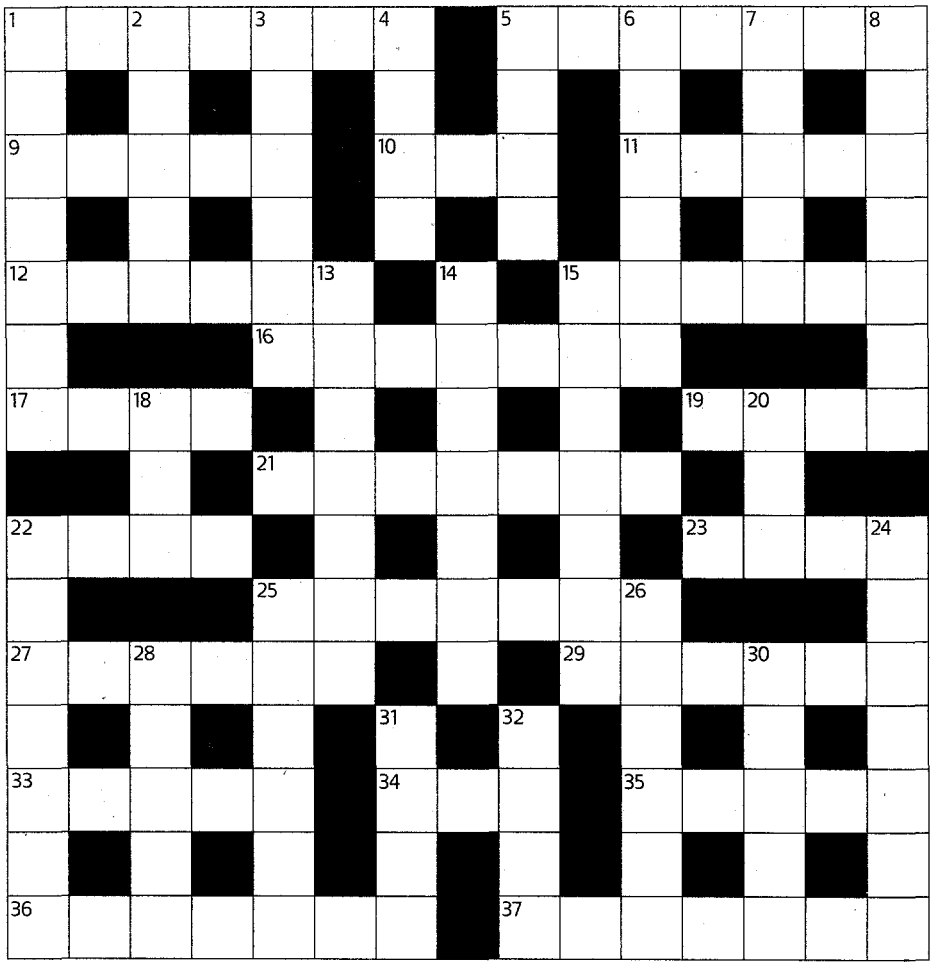

ACROSS

1 What one might do to somebody else, when more striped—or more smelly! (7)

5 See 33

9 and **35** Not kept within the walls, with one more hanging than necessary. (10)

10 See 32 down

11 One is finished in a slangy way, despite having proceeded right. (5)

12 A joke, and a nudge in the ribs for it—though India and Pakistan might not agree, the situation there was funny. (6)

15 Firstborn, showing forged steel has a rather bad mark in it. (6)

16 Not exactly what Teddy meant by "Bully!"—almost sounds like a place for soup! (7)

17 See 31 down

19 See 25

21 Shortly afterward, in an old-fashioned way, you will see it left so one can hold it. (7)

22 See 8 down

23 and **18** down Gloomily forecast the only conclusion that is left? (7)

25 and **19** Was it in the Bible that it suggests putting a President's feet to the fire? (7,4)

27 More inclined to be like Dan, the newscaster? (6)

29 Gave the chow out, since one who did might be in the Army. (6)

33 and **5** On return, ravages things, with Porky having lots of time for other squealers. (5,7)

34 A "with it" joint. (3)

35 See 9 across

36 Evidently Mary Jane is afoul of the law, but one might expect a random hit with it. (7)

37 Feral types go fast, with a possible description of an urn. (3,4)

DOWN

1 Bill can be commonly found here—in just a single place! (3-4)

2 It comes up with the result of a sunning, with such as Oceanus or Uranus. (5)

3 What would the PLO be without this and a British air force at the bottom? (6)

4 What's that up in the air? It's a bird! It's a youngster's plaything! (4)

5 Pierce with color. (4)

6 A musical one-night stand, with a broken leg, which causes some show of amusement. (6)

7 Very light animal? (5)

8 and **22** across Where some take note of a small disfiguration with common lodgings. (7,4)

13 With one of the letters doubled you would be entitled to walk with a former British prime minister. (7)

14 What some people pray is within Mr. Welles perhaps. (7)

15 Prescribes a course of action—a small type one of the Little Women takes in, to a point. (7)

18 See 23 across

20 Alien transport, it is sometimes said. (1,1,1)

22 Rises to the occasion, in a small way, with what sounds like an extra privilege when going to dine. (5,2)

24 Someone like Sweeney came first, and made a childish progression. (7)

25 The beautiful land made to exist with a Hula dance. (6)

26 Goethe, for example, has what some call a bug on a common article. (6)

28 Schubert's music might seem a bit fishy… (5)

30 …which shows in what Rover did to another composer. (5)

31 and **17** across A particle some don't care for, having a row with the writer. (8)

32 and **10** across Is this box colored, however rather plain? (7)

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S	C	A	R	L	E	T	■	U	N	S	O	U	N	D
A	■	T	■	I	■	E	■	T	■	H	■	S	■	E
M	O	R	A	V	I	A	■	T	R	O	W	E	L	S
O	■	O	■	E	■	R	■	E	■	O	■	L	■	I
S	U	P	E	R	■	F	O	R	■	T	R	E	S	S
E	■	H	■	■	■	U	■	E	■	■	■	S	■	T
T	R	Y	S	A	I	L	■	D	E	T	E	S	T	S
■	■	■	N	■	■	■	■	■	■	H	■	■	■	■
L	E	A	N	D	E	R	■	R	E	E	L	I	N	G
O	■	Q	■	■	■	E	■	E	■	■	■	N	■	U
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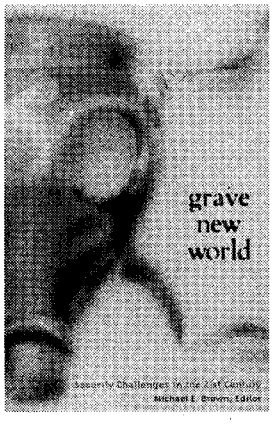

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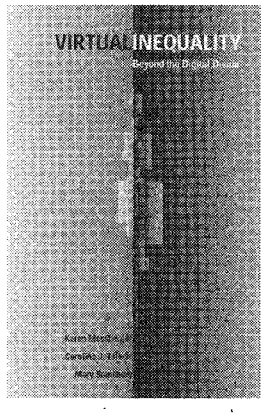

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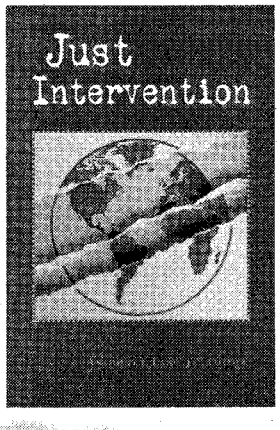

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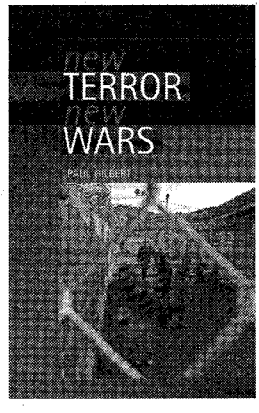

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